

## **Imagination and Fantasy in the Middle Ages and Early Modern Time**

# **Fundamentals of Medieval and Early Modern Culture**



Edited by  
Albrecht Classen and Marilyn Sandidge

## **Volume 24**

# **Imagination and Fantasy in the Middle Ages and Early Modern Time**

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Projections, Dreams, Monsters, and Illusions

Edited by  
Albrecht Classen

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Hieronymus Bosch, "The Garden of Earthly Delights," Detail (© Albrecht Classen).



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# **Imagination, Fantasy, Otherness, and Monstrosity in the Middle Ages and the Early Modern World**

New Approaches to Cultural-Historical and Anthropological Epistemology. Also an Introduction

The following is more than a mere introduction; instead, it represents a comprehensive analysis of what imagination and fantasy might have meant in the Middle Ages and beyond, touching on many different literary texts, art works, religious concepts, and philosophical notions past and present. As the issue at stake is so comprehensive, research has already been very active in coming to terms with it. Below I will provide an extensive literature review and present detailed and extensive discussions of many different relevant sources. To help the reader, I start with a table of content for this contribution only.

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**Albrecht Classen**, University of Arizona, Tucson, USA

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“Because you try to penetrate the shadows,”  
 he said to me, “from much too far away,  
 you confuse the truth with your imagination.”  
 (Dante, *Inferno*, XXXI, vv. 22–24)

“Prove true, imagination!  
 That I, dear brother, be now tak’en for you!”  
 (Shakespeare, *Twelfth Night*, Act 3, Scene 4).

Theseus: “More strange than true. I never may believe  
 These antique fables nor these fairy toys.  
 Lovers and madmen have such seething brains,  
 Such shaping fantasies, that apprehend  
 More than cool reason ever comprehends.  
 The lunatic, the lover, and the poet  
 Are of imagination all compact.  
 One sees more devils than vast hell can hold”  
 (Shakespeare, *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, Act 5, Scene 1).

## Outline and Structure

In this ‘introductory’ study, in a way a little book by itself, I will create a mental roadmap for the entire volume by examining a wide range of documents, art works, theological reflections, and philosophical ruminations that allow us to examine critically the meaning of imagination, fantasy, otherness, and monstrosity as we can observe those aspects in the Middle Ages and the early modern age. As much as possible, I will also attempt to lay the foundation for theoretical reflections on those phenomena and to identify them as important elements for many scholars working in the pre-modern era. After all, human life is the result both of the material conditions we live in and of the projections of our own selves upon the world stage. Mind and matter are intricately intertwined with each other, which cultural historians have always to keep in mind when they look at the phenomena of their investigation. We create our own lives and are the products of life itself, however we might want to define it (God, nature, life as an independent entity, the political system, the local community, school, etc.). We could hence postulate that imagination and fantasy represent the dimension behind the public stage where we normally operate, consciously and unconsciously, and yet we all know that it takes only a small step behind the scene to recognize the full scope of all existence comprising both the material and the immaterial aspect.

Most editors of other similar volumes containing the studies collected from a pool of papers presented at a conference or a symposium are normally

content with outlining briefly the theoretical and cultural-historical framework relevant for the central topic, but then they step aside and give all the room to the contributors. My intention here, by contrast, as in all previous volumes in our series, is to go into detail, to stake out the entire field, to provide insights into the widest range possible of the critical documents and sources, to reflect thoroughly on the current state of research, and to outline how the subsequent contributions can be embedded in this framework. In a way, this is a broadly conceived attempt to establish the foundation for the investigation of this fundamental topic. A complete coverage of everything ever published on imagination and fantasy in the pre-modern world cannot, of course, be expected, but I hope to lead us deeply into this field by engaging with a vast gamut of relevant texts and images from that time period and by reflecting on the relevant international research literature from past and present.

To reflect on the workings of ideology and its mental grounding, it does not really matter what a politician, or even the pope, says in specific terms, but how the words resonate with the audience's fantasy and imagination. Throughout time, major leaders, kings, emperors, generals, dictators, or other types of rulers have been so successful in gaining control and command over their people not necessarily because of their physical might, intellectual ruse, or operational skills, as important as all those aspects might have been, but because of their charisma and thus their ability to reach out to people's sense of identity or lack thereof, whether we think of Alexander the Great, Charlemagne, or the fictional King Arthur. All those figures continue to evoke even modern fantasies and are the foundation of much historical imagination.

If a leader knows how to address deeply hidden desires, fears, or hopes, or understands how to stoke those artificially, then the masses have always willingly followed him/her, such as the Crusader knights or the absolutely loyal troops under the Mongol ruler Genghis Khan. Even though there is no room here to pursue this psychological-historical perspective at length, we can easily recognize the profound relevance of human imagination and fantasy which often drive cultural and political developments more extensively than rationality, mechanical processes, and physical objects, such as money.

Fear of immigrants, asylum seekers, new settlers, or outsiders/minorities, especially of Jews, has always been driven by nationalistic, in-group fantasies, both in the Middle Ages and today, as most dramatically illustrated currently by the fanaticism of the conservatives in the United States, especially under President Donald Trump, to 'defend' their country from that ominous 'wave' of 'brown people' that seems to threaten the national identity or the existence of the entire country; and hence the desperate desire to build a wall that would

stop all ‘pathogenic’ dangers arising from the south, a rhetoric we are, unfortunately, so familiar with from the time of the Hitler regime in Germany.

The masses, as Gustave le Bon had already observed a long time ago, have always been manipulable because they are dangerously subject to their own and alien emotions and dreams and need a leader who promises to actualize those for them if they only follow him/her. The pre-modern era was not an exception to this phenomenon, although we cannot simply equate the modern masses with the people living in the Middle Ages within a feudal system. After all, every type of society depends on a strong leader who knows how to instrumentalize people’s dreams and desires and to transform them into some kind of reality. Nevertheless, this is, basically, the stuff myths are made of, and they have worked just as well in antiquity as well as in the Middle Ages, not even to talk of the twentieth or twenty-first century. Both mass enthusiasm and mass panic (Crusades, anti-Judaism, Hussite wars, etc.) as well as political movements of many different kinds prove to be based to a large extent on emotions and imagination, which a ruthless and calculating leader knows exceedingly well how to utilize for his/her own purposes.<sup>1</sup>

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1 Even though mostly self-published, Richard A. Koenigsberg various studies prove to be highly insightful in this regard; see his *Hitler’s Ideology: A Study in Psychoanalytic Sociology* (New York: The Library of Social Science, 1975); id., *The Psychoanalysis of Racism, Revolution and Nationalism* (New York: The Library of Social Science, 1977); id., *Nations Have the Right to Kill: Hitler, the Holocaust, and War* (Elmhurst, NY: Library of Social Science, 2009). Cf. also Norman Oliver Brown, *Life Against Death: The Psychoanalytic Meaning of History* (London: Sphere Books, 1970), who argues that all of human culture is a manifestation of the human subconsciousness, a process which he calls ‘transference.’ See also Caudia Koonz, *The Nazi Conscience* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2003). See now my own attempt to come to terms with this phenomenon, “Populismus, Nationalismus, Xenophobie und Rassismus: Das Massenproblem aus historischer Sicht. Von Walther von der Vogelweide und Heinrich Wittenwiler zu Thomas Mann und Gustave le Bon,” *Thalloris* 3 (2018/appeared in 2019): 19–36. For a more political and post-modern perspective, see Serge Moscovici, *The Age of the Crowd: A Historical Treatise on Mass Psychology* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press; Paris: Editions de la Maison des Sciences de l’Homme, 1985); Michael Günther, *Masse und Charisma: soziale Ursachen des politischen und religiösen Fanatismus* (Frankfurt a. M. and New York: Peter Lang, 2005); Dan Hassler-Forest, *Science Fiction, Fantasy, and Politics: Transmedia World-Building Beyond Capitalism*. Radical Cultural Studies (London and New York: Rowman & Littlefield International, 2016). As to the operation of myths in history, see Albrecht Classen, “The Ambiguity of Charlemagne in Late Medieval German Literature: The De- and Reconstruction of a Mythical Figure,” *Medievalia et Humanistica*, New Series, 45 (2019): 1–26. As to the role of a leader in the medieval context, see Albrecht Classen, “The Principles of Honor, Virtue, Leadership, and Ethics: Medieval Epics Speak Out against the Political Malaise in the Twenty-First Century. *The Nibelungenlied* and *El Poema de Mio Cid*,” *Amsterdamer Beiträge zur älteren Germanistik* 79 (2019):

Once again, as in all previous volumes of our series “Fundamentals of Medieval and Early Modern Culture,” while the focus here rests on the pre-modern age, the issues at stake prove to be of universal significance. By focusing on the specific documents chosen by myself and the contributors, we hope to open up a new chapter within the broad discourse of two of the most critical issues in human life.

Although these two terms, imagination and fantasy, have been discussed already from many different perspectives, involving philosophical and religious approaches, among many other schools of thought, here I will not distinguish between them strictly and will attempt to bring the various facets together for a collective whole, providing a variety of materials to illustrate the specific use of those concepts in their relevant contexts. For our purposes, it might suffice to observe that these two terms are not exactly the same, yet they function (or simply exist) in very similar fashions and deeply determine human existence collectively. For some thinkers, imagination is connected with divine inspiration (mysticism, Rosicrucianism, Romanticism, religious spirituality), whereas fantasy proves to be the product of the human mind, but I will leave all this deliberately vague because it would not be possible to draw clear-cut distinctions in face of a myriad of cultural manifestations of both forces, including the imaginary (as seen by Wolfgang Iser, among others; cf. below).<sup>2</sup>

Modern research has tended to give considerable credit to the Greek philosophers Plato and Aristotle in their discussion of human mentality and then to dismiss the role of both forces (imagination and fantasy) in the pre-modern era, as if those issues had not been relevant in the Middle Ages. Instead, scholars have then regularly highlighted the efforts of thinkers and poets from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries only who were allegedly the first ones to

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388–409. As to the negative role which Jews have always played in Christian fantasies, see the contribution to this volume by Birgit Wiedl.

<sup>2</sup> See the contribution to this volume by Thomas Willard, focused on the works of Thomas Vaughan, a remarkable English Rosicrucian deeply invested in the meaning of imagination for spiritual purposes. The term ‘imagination’ has been used quite often in a variety of relevant studies, but then mostly in a rather vague, almost meaningless sense, referring to the phenomenon of literature and art as such, to paganism, superstition, faith in saints, daily rituals, ceremonies, etc.; see, for instance, Philippe Walter, *Para una arqueología del imaginario medieval: Mitos y ritos paganos en el calendario cristiano y en la literatura del medioevo* (Seminarios en México), ed. and trans. Cristina Azuela. Ediciones Especiales, 68 (Mexico City: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 2013); Michael A. Vargas, *Constructing Catalan Identity: Memory, Imagination, and the Medieval* (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018).

develop specific aesthetic categories to describe these phenomena, such as Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772–1834) (reproductive fancy, primary imagination, secondary imagination).<sup>3</sup> We must always accept that imagination matters in almost every human dimension, whether in the arts or in the sciences, in philosophy or in medicine, in literature or in music, music or religion.<sup>4</sup>

## The Case of the *Wunderer*

However, we will observe further down that by the late Middle Ages already a stronger rift developed separating imagination as something powerful and real, from fantasy as something fanciful, playful, maybe even dismissible, such as in the case of the various stages of presenting dragons and other monstrous creatures.<sup>5</sup> One interesting, heretofore hardly studied example would be the rather curious, maybe disjointed and illogical heroic epic, *Der Wunderer* (ca. 1550), where the monster/outsider, the Wonderer (or Wondrous Being), pursues a maid who had been promised to him as his future wife. Since she refuses now to grant him her hand, he intends to eat her up, a clear case of cannibalism, a

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3 H. Mainusch, “Imagination,” *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie*, ed. Joachim Ritter and Karlfried Gründer. Completely new ed. by Rudolf Eisler. Vol. 4 (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1976), 217–20; Philipp Wolf, “Einbildungskraft,” *Metzler Lexikon: Literatur- und Kulturtheorie. Ansätze – Personen – Grundbegriffe*, ed. Ansgar Nünning. 5th updated and expanded ed. (Stuttgart and Weimar: J. B. Metzler, 2013), 160–61. See also the contributions to *Inventions of the Imagination: Romanticism and Beyond*, ed. Richard T. Gray, Nicholas Halmi, and Gary J. Handwerk (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2011); and to *The Imagination in German Idealism and Romanticism*, ed. Gerard Gentry and Konstantin Pollok (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019). See also the contributions to *Romantic Rapports: New Essays on Romanticism Across the Disciplines*, ed. Larry H. Peer and Christopher R. Clason (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2017). Thomas Willard, in his contribution to this volume, offers a detailed examination of the meaning of imagination in the work of Thomas Vaughan, especially his *Lumen de Lumine: Or a new Magicall Light discovered and Communicated to the World* from 1651, but he clearly endeavors to keep in mind the origins of the philosophical discourse on this phenomenon. For a corrective view regarding the critical approaches to dreams, imagination, and fantasy in the early Middle Ages, see the contribution to this volume by David Bennett and Filip Radovic.

4 *Imagination: Cross-Cultural Philosophical Analyses*, ed. Hans-Georg Moeller and Andrew Whitehead (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2018). The contributors consider the role of imagination both in the East and in the West and study philosophers such as Zhuangzi, Plato, Confucius, Heidegger, and Nietzsche, along with imagination in Buddhist thought and in Daoism.

5 See especially the contribution by Siegfried Christoph in this volume.

rare case for the Middle Ages (see, however, Grendel in *Beowulf*), but she is ultimately saved by the hero Dietrich of Bern who can overcome and kill the grotesque creature.<sup>6</sup>

Ironically, the maid then turns out to be nothing but an ideal, an allegorical figure representing fundamental courtly values, who commands over three strengths or functions; first, she has the capability to perceive immediately the true character of an individual; second, to grant blessing to anyone and to guarantee his safety; and third, to transport herself to any location wherever she might want to be. It remains entirely unclear why she hence would not rescue herself from the Wonderer by teleporting herself to safety, but there are many other problems with that text anyway which would allow us to identify it as a literary failure of grand proportions.

Nevertheless, in our context, we only need to keep in mind that here we face an intriguing example of truly fanciful imagination, with all the elements of pure fictionality present because even the maid is nothing but an allegory, “fraw Seld” (stanza 5208, v. 1; Lady Happiness).

For the subsequent investigations, however, all we need to know at this point is that these two elements are fundamental in creating human culture and are essential in areas of human life such as spirituality, the arts, but also in the sciences and medicine, whether we can identify theoretical discussions about them or not. As Wilhelm Schmidt-Biggemann notes:

The worlds of spirituality are fantastical, deriving from revelations that cannot be critically investigated. Yet they must nonetheless be taken for real because of their impact on human behaviour, even if there is no other proof of their existence than the belief in their revelation. Their existence can only be proven in a logical circle: They are held to be real since they are believed to have effects. This belief may be the particular effect they have, and this is indeed precisely what believers attribute to the spiritual world. Thus there is no possible critical or emancipatory access to the world of spirituality.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> *Der Wunderer*, ed. Florian Kragl. Texte und Studien zur mittelhochdeutschen Heldenepik, 9 (Berlin and Boston: Walter de Gruyter, 2015); see now, for a rather critical, perhaps ‘deconstructive,’ reading, Albrecht Classen, “*Der Wunderer*. Hybridität, Erzähllogik und narrative Fragmentierung in der Literatur des deutschen Spätmittelalters,” *Wirkendes Wort* 66.3 (2016): 371–84.

<sup>7</sup> Wilhelm Schmidt-Biggemann, *Philosophia perennis: Historical Outlines of Western Spirituality in Ancient, Medieval and Early Modern Thought*. International Archives of the History of Ideas, 189 (1998; Dordrecht: Springer, 2004), 3. See also Thomas Willard’s comments about Schmidt-Biggemann’s observations in his contribution to this volume. Cf. also the profound insights into the role of the human soul with respect to the material existence and to God by Thomas Merton, *No Man is an Island* (New York: Harcourt, Brace World, 1955).

In fact, medieval and early modern philosophers were deeply involved in the discussion about the origin of the world, the question regarding time and its limitation, and the relationship between God and creation. Scientific evidence was not available, and it is absent today as well.

## Medieval Philosophy and Imagination

Philosophy, as practiced by Henry of Ghent (1217–1293), Duns Scotus (ca. 1266–Nov. 8, 1308), and William of Occam (ca. 1287–1347) focused deeply on issues pertaining to free will, contingency, and the conditions of the material existence, and much of this draws fundamental insights from imagination as the only possible source to draw some solid conclusions about the meaning of this life and about the relationship between the human individual and the Godhead.

The debate regarding the infinity of this world, necessity, and causation, as it raged throughout the Middle Ages, actually laid the foundation for similar probes of the mathematical theories of our own time.<sup>8</sup> The severe condemnation of two hundred and nineteen theses or propositions allegedly developed by members of the Paris university, issued by Bishop Etienne Tempier in 1277, clearly indicates the extent to which the Church perceived the threat resulting from free imagination and open-ended philosophical discourse, all of which could no longer be clearly controlled by the clerical authorities, deeply afraid of unorthodox thinking and revolutionary ideas developed by the rebellious philosophers.<sup>9</sup> As the contribution by David Bennett and Filip Radovic will demonstrate, imagination mattered deeply for ancient, early medieval Arabic, and high medieval Christian philosophers, who regularly regarded it as a bridge to the divine.

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<sup>8</sup> *Basic Issues in Medieval Philosophy: Selected Readings Presenting the Interactive Discourses Among the Major Figures*, ed. Richard N. Bosley and Martin M. Tweedale. 2nd ed. (1997; Peterborough, Ont.: Broadview Press, 2006), 127–29, et passim.

<sup>9</sup> *Basic Issues in Medieval Philosophy* (see note 8), 47–50; see also *Aufklärung im Mittelalter: Die Verurteilung von 1277. Die Dokumente des Bischofs von Paris eingeleitet, übersetzt und erläutert* von Kurt Flasch. Dieterich'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung, excerpta classica, VI (Mainz: Dieterich'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1989); John Marenbon, *Medieval Philosophy: An Historical and Philosophical Introduction* (London and New York: Routledge, 2007), 266–70; Hans Thijssen, “Condemnation of 1277,” *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, online at: <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/condemnation/> (2003, rev. 2018), which offers also a great bibliography.

## Medicine and Imagination

We can also point to medical-historical evidence supporting this claim that imagination matters quite critically. Indeed, as Chiara Benati indicates in her contribution to this volume, many aspects of medieval and early modern medicine were determined by imaginary healing strategies, such as charms, to which we could easily add many different forms of spiritual healing by means of religious performances. This now finds surprising support by the representatives of integrative medicine who believe much more in the healing power of the human mind than in pharmaceutical products.<sup>10</sup> The purpose here can thus not be to write a history of imagination or fantasy, an impossible task in the first place; instead, the intention is to develop fundamental insights into the workings, consequences, and impact of these two forces, each on its own, but then also in tandem with each other, and then into the material conditions that allow both forces to come forth in concrete form in cultural-historical terms. Healing efforts always begin with some ideas, and those are then translated into words (charms, prescriptions, etc.) and actions.

It might have been possible, perhaps even advisable, here to begin with some comments about the psychological properties of those human elements, instincts, or motives, but this book will not pursue a scientific or medical approach, as promising as those connections might be for Medieval and Early Modern Studies. However, future research might endeavor to build meaningful bridges between those fields, such as neuroscience or psychology on the one hand, and the humanities on the other – certainly a promising perspective

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<sup>10</sup> Albrecht Classen, "Introduction: Bathing, Health Care, Medicine, and Water in the Middle Ages and Early Modern Age," *Bodily and Spiritual Hygiene in Medieval and Early Modern Literature: Exploration of Textual Presentations of Filth and Water*, ed. A. Classen. *Fundamentals of Medieval and Early Modern Culture*, 19 (Berlin and Boston: Walter de Gruyter, 2017), 1–87; *Integrative Geriatric Medicine*, ed. Mikhail Kogan (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018); Edzard Ernst, *Alternative Medicine: A Critical Assessment of 150 Modalities* (Cham: Copernicus, 2019); see also the contributions to *Erfahrungsorientierte Therapie: integrative Psychotherapie und moderne Psychosomatik*, ed. Kilian Mehl (Berlin: Springer, 2017); Joachim Dreves, *Integrative Onkologie: Definition – Inhalte – Bedeutung* (Berlin and Boston: Walter de Gruyter, 2020). There is a lot of movement and development in this entire field, as documented by various scientific journals, such as the *Journal of Evidence-Based Integrative Medicine*. See now also Daniel McCann, *Soul-Health: Therapeutic Reading in Later Medieval England*. *Religion and Culture in the Middle Ages* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2018).



especially considering the specific workings of those evanescent powers working behind the scene that affect all aspects of human life.<sup>11</sup>

## Spirituality and the Human Mind

The following essay intends to achieve a variety of concrete goals. After some general comments about the meaning of imagination and fantasy as crucial aspects of all human existence throughout history, I will discuss a wide variety of manifestations of those two features in medieval and early modern literature and a variety of other texts and art works, including world maps, sculptures, and paintings. We could also consider architecture, political structures, theater, opera, food production and preparation, agriculture, and so forth, but I believe that literature and the arts are the most promising categories where imagination and fantasy come forth very drastically. This roadmap will also indicate the many avenues this topic invites us to pursue, taking us into a variety of directions and will involve virtually every aspect of human culture and human mentality. I will take the liberty to enter into some of the main arteries, pursue them for some time, and then return to the main point of the investigation, outlining thereby the vast range of possible aspects, materials, documents, methods, and concepts. My hope is that this long study will serve as a kind of hub for all subsequent articles which will then lock onto it and serve as essential tools to pursue special perspectives taking us deeply into the overarching topic.

Imagination and fantasy, both intimately intertwined with each other, are, of course, virtually ubiquitous and have determined human life throughout history on the entire globe, so there is a certain danger to incorporate here practically everything produced by people, that is, texts, objects, images, and ideas, despite the

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<sup>11</sup> Jean Aitchison, *Words in the Mind: An Introduction to the Mental Lexicon*. 4th ed. (1987; Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012); for new interdisciplinary perspectives, see the contributions to *Performing Psychologies: Imagination, Creativity and Dramas of the Mind*, ed. Nicola Shaughnessy and Philip Barnard. Performance and Science: Interdisciplinary Dialogues (London: Methuen Drama, 2019). As David Braine, *Language & Human Understanding: The Roots of Creativity in Speech and Thought* (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2018), bluntly states, “A right account of language is, I believe, the key to a right account of the nature of human understanding” (1). However, he pursues a linguistic argument, like many other important scholars. See now Wallace Chafe, *Thought-Based Linguistics: How Languages Turn Thoughts into Sounds* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018). Cf. also Stephen T. Aschman and Rami Gabriel, *The Emotional Mind: The Affective Roots of Culture and Cognition* (Cambridge, MA, and London: Harvard University Press, 2019).

definite limitation to the Middle Ages and the early modern age pursued here. Nevertheless, the co-dependency of imagination and reality, or spirituality and physical conditions, is virtually self-evident: "Ideas themselves can be said to have their place in the spiritual realm. They do not reside in external reality; they are real in the human mind, and motivate human behaviour, habits and acts."<sup>12</sup>

As Thomas Merton (1915–1968) emphasizes, "Yet our purpose in life is to discover this meaning and live according to it. We have, therefore, something to live for. The process of living, of growing up, and becoming a person, is precisely the gradually increasing awareness of what that something is."<sup>13</sup> For this Trappist author, this search aims for the discovery of one's own salvation, which has to go through a process of losing oneself and the rediscovery of meaning in a mystical unification with the Godhead.<sup>14</sup> In more concrete terms, this means for Merton that "there is a spiritual selfishness which even poisons the good act of giving to another. Spiritual goods are greater than the material, and it is possible for me to love selfishly in the very act of depriving myself of material things for the benefit of another."<sup>15</sup> For our purposes, however, we can content ourselves with cultural-historical reflections on the relevance of imagination (spirituality) and fantasy in the pre-modern world.

Our roadmap must be broad, and yet specific as well in many different areas, giving major preference to the principles of cultural history. Despite the danger of (over)generalizations, the hope is that we will gain a concrete handle on those two aspects, imagination and fantasy, as fundamental forces of cultural identity, here focused on the pre-modern world.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Schmidt-Biggemann, *Philosophia perennis* (see note 7), 4.

<sup>13</sup> Merton, *No Man is an Island* (see note 7), xi.

<sup>14</sup> Merton, *No Man is an Island* (see note 7), xv.

<sup>15</sup> Merton, *No Man is an Island* (see note 7), xviii.

<sup>16</sup> Aisling Byrne, *Otherworlds. Fantasy and History in Medieval Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016); see also the contributions to *Marvels, Monsters, and Miracles. Studies in the Medieval and Early Modern Imaginations*, ed. Timothy S. Jones and David A. Sprunger. Studies in Medieval Culture, 42 (Kalamazoo, MI: Western Michigan University. Medieval Institute Publications, 2002); for some studies on the perception of 'the other,' as a critical feature of imagination, see Svetlana I. Luchitskaya, "Muslims in Christian Imagery of the Thirteenth Century: the Visual Code of Otherness," *Al-Masāq* 12 (2000): 37–67; Manuel Núñez Rodríguez, "Iconografia de uma marginalidade: o repúdio do 'outro'," *Signum: Revista da ABREM (Associação Brasileira de Estudos Medievais)*, 2 (2000): 43–78; cf. also Gillian R. Evans, "Sources of the Notion of 'Otherness' in Twelfth-Century Commentaries on Boethius' *Opuscula sacra*," *Archivum Latinitatis Medii Aevi (Bulletin Du Cange)* 40 (1977): 103–13; Jay T. Lees, "Confronting the Otherness of the Greeks: Anselm of Havelberg and the Division between Greeks and Latins," *Analecta Praemonstratensia*, 68 (1992), 224–40; Enrica Ruato, "God and the Worm: The Twofold Otherness in Pseudo-Dionysius's Theory of Dissimilar Images,"

## Literary Fantasies

To be sure, there are distinct differences between a narrative (literature or art) that addresses factual or material aspects, and then fanciful features contained in it that mirror fantasy or are the result of imagination. Both in the Middle High German *Herzog Ernst* and in the Franco-Venetian *Il Milione* by Marco Polo, for instance, we observe the intricate combination of concrete, historically verifiable elements with products of fantasy that served to entertain and excite the audience. While previous approaches to cultural history, emphasizing, above all, mentality, history of everyday life, or emotions, have produced many excellent results, here I want to create this roadmap for a new methodology, giving primary attention to outgrowths of the human mind, whether images of monsters, magical objects,<sup>17</sup> fanciful projections of foreign lands and people, utopian perspectives (Land of Cockaigne), or religious, mystical visions, next to Islamophobia and anti-Judaism. For those who study the history of mentality, such as Peter Dinzelbacher, visions or images are just as concrete as physical objects because they reflect specifically concepts in the individual's mind. When those images are widespread, we gain even better access to universal concepts representative of that individual culture or society.<sup>18</sup>

The world of King Arthur was not a side-track of medieval mentality; instead, medieval courtly romances, often with this mythical king in their center, attracted the full attention by the contemporary audiences, and claims that already pre-modern readers questioned Arthur's, Merlin's, or Lancelot's historical

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*American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 82 (2008): 581–92. For the approach to the marvelous in the late Middle Ages and the early modern age, see the contributions to *La Raison du merveilleux à la fin du Moyen Âge et dans la première modernité: Textes et images*, ed. Dominique de Courcelles. Rencontres, 399 (Paris: Classiques Garnier, 2019). Georges Tilly, for instance, in his “La raison de l'étonnement: Le numerus dans l'Actius (1507) de Giovanni Pontano” (185–216), explores early modern forms of wonder about the phenomena in this world. Wolfgang Adam, in his “Le merveilleux dans la Cosmographie universelle de Sébastien Münster, 1544” (275–94), highlights the extent to which wonders, monsters, and similar phenomena continued to be present in early modern world cosmography. See now also the contributions to this volume by Daniel F. Pigg and Siegfried Christoph. In the case of Christoph's study, the monsters have lost their terrifying character and appear more like marvelous creatures serving popular memory.

**17** Allegra Iafrate, *The Long Life of Magical Objects: A Study in the Solomonic Tradition*. The Magic in History Series (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania University Press, 2019).

**18** K. Schjelderup, *Die Askese: eine religionspsychologische Untersuchung* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1928), 116. See now Peter Dinzelbacher, *Vision und Magie: Religiöses Erleben im Mittelalter* (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 2019), 43–57.

significance (not necessarily ‘reality’) seem to be rather doubtful.<sup>19</sup> Another example would be the anonymous alliterative Middle English romance *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, where much is based on pure fantasy, as we would call it, or on magic, ludic elements, and theatrical illusions, but the essential message of the text concerns fundamental issues relevant for courtly society (honor); otherwise the knights of the Round Table would not all subsequently don a green belt themselves, a public display of their ethical principles (see below).

As Karen Sullivan now asserts, “the authors of the medieval Arthurian corpus insisted that their works were, not fables dreamed up by their own idle powers of invention, but histories, based upon eyewitness testimony as transcribed by reliable clerics.”<sup>20</sup> Yet, then she rallies against modern critics, including famous Max Weber, and their “assumption that the medieval world existed under a kind of spell,” but not because she questions their position, but to insist that medieval audiences already raised serious criticism against the claim that those romances represented historical reality. To me, this amounts to a flawed understanding of what medieval literature was all about, and hence about the function of imagination and fictionality.

People throughout history have always responded to and are driven by ideas, concepts, or sentiments, both positively and negatively. This means that this essay and this book focus on fundamental aspects in cultural developments at large.<sup>21</sup> We know, for example, that well until the eighteenth or

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**19** This, however, is the claim by Karen Sullivan, *The Danger of Romance: Truth, Fantasy, and Arthurian Fiction* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2018). Even though Randy P. Schiff now offers a very positive review online at *The Medieval Review* (19.9.17), it seems rather doubtful that the members of medieval courts perceived a clear rift between historicity and fictionality the way Sullivan projects. The case of the *lais* by Marie de France or of the many different works by Konrad von Würzburg, to mention just two names, undermines Sullivan’s theoretical claim. I am afraid that she reads the Arthurian romances from a post-medieval perspective, erroneously taking Cervantes’s *El ingenioso hidalgo Don Quijote de la Mancha* (1605 and 1615) or Gustave Flaubert’s *Madame Bovary* (1856) as measuring sticks for pre-modern ideas about the role of literature.

**20** Sullivan, *The Danger of Romance* (see note 19), 8. She subsequently weakens her own stance and affirms: “Confronted with the contradiction between the works’ claims to historicity and the evidence of their fictionality, audiences of medieval romance were faced with a fiction that refuses to admit its fictionality and is thus doubly fictional” (10). For the following quote, see 12.

**21** See, for a variety of approaches, the contributions to *Imagination in the Later Middle Ages and Early Modern Times: Imaginatio in the Intellectual Traditions from Late-Medieval to Early Modern Times*, ed. Lodi Nauta and Detlev Pätzold. Groningen Studies in Cultural Change, 12 (Leuven and Dudley, MA: Peeters, 2004). The topic here focuses on late medieval analysis of the mind in the theoretical terms (Jan. R. Veenstra) and its relationship with the body (Olaf Pluta), on the relationship between morality, rationality, natural law, and conscience (M. W. F. Stone),

nineteenth century the semiotic system incorporated the magical or fantastical into the scientific/scholarly world view. Magic was feared, but also pursued with considerable interest; monsters were perceived as real, as were dragons or dwarfs because everything reflected God's potentiality and creativity which could easily incorporate hybridity – see, for instance, Gerald of Wales's *Itinerarium Cambriae* (1191) and his *Descriptio Cambriae* (1194), or Thüring von Ringoltingen's *Melusine*, 1456<sup>22</sup> – as much as some individuals might have responded to those phenomena with fear and horror. As Ursula Kocher comments, highlighting the central importance of literature in this epistemological process, "Literatur wird zum Experimentierfeld für die Verortung dessen, was imaginiert und wahrgenommen werden kann bzw. darf" (Literature turns into a field of experiments to locate and identify what can or is allowed to be imagined and perceived).<sup>23</sup> Wilhelm Schmidt-Biggemann asserts, reflecting on imagination and religion: "fantastical imagery can only be true if it is in accordance with the theological presuppositions about reality. If this accordance is not achieved, the fantastical worlds that do not share the concept of creation – the Greek or Roman religions for example – must be wrong."<sup>24</sup>

## Imagination of the Foreign

People in the late Middle Ages, for instance, found themselves severely confronted with, if not endangered by, the Mongols, who appeared to be the worst outgrowth of their own apocalyptic nightmares, or fantasies, turned into a military reality. Fear and imagination oddly mingled in that case, mixing the Mongols

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on imagination in the rhetorical tradition (Peter Mack), on imagination in early modern French paintings (Suzanne Kooij), and on some other aspects pertaining to the mind in philosophical terms as discussed by pre-modern intellectuals.

**22** We certainly would have to differentiate between the various categories underneath these large terms and consider the historical transformations of *mirabilia*, *miracula*, then wonders, illusions, and magic; see now Martina Di Febo, *Mirabilia e meraviglie: le trasformazioni del meraviglioso nei secoli xii–xv*. Premio Testi di dottorato, 3 (Macerata: eum edizioni università di Macerata, 2015); cf. the detailed review by Anne Caiozzo, *Cahiers de civilisation médiévale: Xe–XIIe siècles* 59 (2016): 479–81. See also the contribution to this volume by Scott L. Taylor.

**23** Ursula Kocher, "Frühe Neuzeit," *Phantastik: Ein interdisziplinäres Handbuch*, ed. Hans Richard Brittnacher and Markus May (Stuttgart and Weimar: J. B. Metzler, 2013), 19–23; here 20; see also Günther Butzer, "Mirabilia und Phantasmata: Die poetische Imagination des Anderen," *Imaginationen des Anderen im 16. und 17. Jahrhundert*, ed. Ina Schabert and Michaela Boenke. Wolfenbütteler Forschungen, 97 (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2002), 99–122.

**24** Schmidt-Biggemann, *Philosophia perennis* (see note 7), 10.

with monsters and other strange creatures, as Roger Bacon (ca. 1214–1292) or Matthew Paris (discussed in great detail.<sup>25</sup> Similarly, Jews and heretics, but at

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**25** *Peoples of the Apocalypse. Eschatological Beliefs and Political Scenarios*, ed. by Wolfram Brandes, Felicitas Schmieder and Rebekka Voß (Berlin and Boston: Walter de Gruyter, 2016); Felicitas Schmieder, *Europa und die Fremden: Die Mongolen im Urteil des Abendlandes vom 13. bis in das 15. Jahrhundert* (Sigmaringen: Thorbecke, 1994); Peter Jackson, *The Mongols and the West 1221–1410* (Harlow: Pearson Longman, 2005); Heather Blurton, *Cannibalism in High Medieval English Literature*. The New Middle Ages (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 81–104; Juliane Schiel, *Mongolensturm und Fall Konstantinopels: Dominikanische Erzählungen im diachronen Vergleich* (Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2011); Katharina Schmidt, *Trauma und Erinnerung. Die Historisierung der Mongoleninvasion im mittelalterlichen Polen und Ungarn* (Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag Winter, 2013); Denise Aigle, *Mongol Empire Between Myth and Reality: Studies in Anthropological History* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2014). There is also a vast body of important research on the history of the Jews in the Middle Ages, especially viewed by their Christian neighbors, often the worst enemies because of the proximity and familiarity. See, for instance, Heinz Schreckenberg, *Die christlichen Adversus-Judaeos-Texte und ihr literarisches und historisches Umfeld (13. – 20. Jh.)*. Vol. 1. Europäische Hochschulschriften: Reihe 23, Theologie, 172 (Frankfurt a. M., Bern, et al.: Peter Lang, 1982); id., *Die christlichen Adversus-Judaeos-Texte und ihr literarisches und historisches Umfeld. [2]. (11. – 13. Jh.); mit einer Ikonographie des Judenthemas bis zum 4. Laterankonzil*. Vol. 2. Europäische Hochschulschriften: Reihe 23, Theologie, 335 (Frankfurt a. M., Bern, et al.: Peter Lang, 1988); id., *Die christlichen Adversus-Judaeos-Texte und ihr literarisches und historisches Umfeld: (13. – 20. Jh.)*. Europäische Hochschulschriften: Reihe 23, Theologie, 497 (Frankfurt a. M., Bern, et al.: Peter Lang, 1994); Michele Cassandro, *Intolleranza e accettazione. Gli ebrei in Italia nei secoli XIV–XVIII. Lineamenti di una storia economica e sociale* (Turin: Giappichelli Editore, 1996); Anthony Bale, *Feeling Persecuted: Christians, Jews and Images of Violence in the Middle Ages* (London: Reaktion Book, 2000); Irvn M. Resnick, *Marks of Distinction. Christian Perceptions of Jews in the High Middle Ages* (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2012); David Nirenberg, *Anti-Judaism: The Western Tradition* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2014); David Nirenberg, *Communities of Violence: Persecution of Minorities in the Middle Ages* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2015); *Identidades cuestionadas. Coexistencia y conflictos interreligiosos en el mediterráneo (ss. XIV–XVIII)*, ed. Borja Franco Llopis and others (Valencia: Universidad de Valencia, 2016); Maya Soifer Irish, *Jews and Christians in Medieval Castile: Tradition, Coexistence, and Change* (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2016); see also the contribution to this volume by Birgit Wiedl. For the topic of other outsiders, see Timothy May, *The Mongol Empire* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2018). See also Antti Ruotsala, “Roger Bacon and the Imperial Mongols of the Thirteenth Century,” *The Steppe Lands and the World Beyond Them: Studies in Honor of Victor Spinei on His 70th Birthday*, ed. Florin Curta, Bogdan-Petru Maleon (Iași: Editura Universității “Al. I. Cuza”, 2013), 345–53. He concludes: “Bacon’s inspired, detailed and, on many occasions, exceptional analysis of the Mongols and of their Empire represents an acute insight into the power and globalizing influence that the imperial Mongols had in the world in the thirteenth century” (353). See also the contributions to *Meeting the Foreign in the Middle Ages*, ed. A. Classen (New York and London: Routledge, 2002). The literature on this topic is legion, but we can be certain that most forms of anti-Judaism or anti-Semitism are the

times simply foreigners or nomads in the East were regularly perceived with suspicion, hatred, and rejection, mostly because people were afraid of losing their own identity and hence resorted to blind opposition, hostility, and anger, certainly basic emotional reactions that, in this concoction, continue to exert strong influence on many groups today.

The huge popularity of the *Alexander* romances throughout the entire Middle Ages and beyond, all containing references to and treatments of monsters and other mysterious creatures from the East, underscores this phenomenon quite drastically and confirms the great significance of the imaginary and fanciful.<sup>26</sup> Similarly, the Middle High German *Lucidarius*, originally composed ca. 1190/1195 on the basis of the *Elucidarium* by Honorius Augustodunensis (ca. 1080–ca. 1154), the *De philosophia mundi* by William of Conches (ca. 1090–after 1154), the *De divina officiis* by Rupert of Deutz (ca. 1075/80–ca. 1129), and the *Gemma animae* by Honorius, provided virtually encyclopedic information about God and the world, and then also about the mythical East (India) with its many monsters (Book I, 49–55).<sup>27</sup>

As imaginary as many sections in the *Lucidarius* prove to be, the didactic approach with a disciple asking his master about everything in a systematic fashion and the impressive organization of the data presented here all contributed to the great success which this text experienced. Indeed, it exerted a tremendous appeal throughout the ages far into the late sixteenth century, probably especially because of the intricate combination of facts with fiction.<sup>28</sup> In other

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direct result of irrational fears and mental concepts aimed at a minority group that the majority group is trying to scapegoat, and this both in the Middle Ages and today.

**26** *The Alexander Romance: History and Literature*, ed. Richard Stoneman, Agnieszka Wojciechowska, and Krzysztof Nawotka. Ancient narrative. Supplementum, 25 (Groningen: Barkhuis, 2018); *Alexander the Great and the East: History, Art, Tradition*, ed. Krzysztof Nawotka and Agnieszka Wojciechowska (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2016); *Alexander the Great in the Middle Ages: Transcultural Perspectives*, ed. Markus Stock (Toronto, Buffalo, and London: University of Toronto Press, 2016); Jutta Zackor, *Alexander der Große auf mittelalterlichen Weltkarten: Alexander Macedo – domitor mundi?* (Berlin: Winter Industries, 2013). The scholarly literature on this topic is legion. See also below where I will return to this mythical figure.

**27** *Der deutsche Lucidarius*. Vol. 1: *Kritischer Text nach den Handschriften*, ed. Dagmar Gottschall and Georg Steer (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer, 1994); Vol. 3: *Kommentar*, by Marlies Hamm (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer, 2002). Vol. 4, ed. by Helgard Ulmschneider, deals with the history of reception (Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2011).

**28** Georg Steer, “Lucidarius,” *Die deutsche Literatur des Mittelalters: Verfasserlexikon*. 2nd compl. rev. and expanded ed. by Kurt Ruh et al. Vol. 5 (Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1985), 939–47; Sabina Foidl, “Lucidarius,” *Deutsches Literatur-Lexikon: Das Mittelalter*, ed. Wolfgang Achtnitz. Vol. 1 (Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2011), 558–61 (apart from a bibliographical update, this is basically a copy of Steers solid overview); cf. also Robert Luff,

words, the consequences of human imagination are most curious, frightening, but also exciting and creative, all depending on the circumstances, appearing both in fictional and in encyclopedic, more or less factual narratives.<sup>29</sup> We can thus subscribe to the observation that also medical, scientific, and theological knowledge, as recorded in such major romances and encyclopedias, mirrored deeply anchored forms of imagination and also fantasy. For instance, when the student asks the master why there are so many monstrous people in India and elsewhere, the teacher explains that women are to be blamed. After Adam's expulsion from Paradise, he knew the property of all roots, and he warned women not to eat those of evil quality. However, the women ignored him, driven by their own curiosity, or arrogance ("furwiz") and thus had to experience that their own offsprings were monstrous in appearance (I, 55).

## Magic, the Miraculous, Fantasy, and Romanticism

The three concepts of *mirabilis*, *magicus*, and *miraculosus* dominated the pre-modern mind, even though *magia* increasingly assumed strongly negative characteristics since the late fifteenth and particularly sixteenth century (anonymous, *Historia von D. Johann Fausten*, 1587; Christopher Marlowe, *The Tragical History of Doctor Faustus*, ca. 1589 and 1592).<sup>30</sup> The fantastic and monstrous had its fully accepted place on the early modern stage, such as in Shakespeare's *Othello* (1603 or 1604) or in his *Tempest* (1610/1611; see the figure Caliban and the magician Prospero), or in the various mourning plays by Andreas Gryphius (1616–1664).<sup>31</sup> The same applies to the role of ghosts as projected on the early modern stage, such as in Spanish Baroque theater.<sup>32</sup> Little wonder that the Romantics enjoyed drawing from medieval sources for their own fantastic imaginations, even though the social, political, and ideological conditions had changed dramatically. However, here I draw a stronger line of distinction and focus only on the pre-modern world in order to avoid the

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*Wissensvermittlung im europäischen Mittelalter: ›Imago mundi‹-Werke und ihre Prologe. Texte und Textgeschichte*, 47 (1999; Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2012).

<sup>29</sup> *Der imaginierte Nomade: Formel und Realitätsbezug bei antiken, mittelalterlichen und arabischen Autoren*, ed. by Alexander Weiß. *Nomaden und Sesshafte*, 8 (Wiesbaden: Reichert, 2007).

<sup>30</sup> Sibylle Baumbach, "Frühe Neuzeit: England," *Phantastik: Ein interdisziplinäres Handbuch* (see note 23), 23–27.

<sup>31</sup> Baumbach, "Frühe Neuzeit: England" (see note 23), 24–25; cf. John Pizer's contribution to the present volume.

<sup>32</sup> See the contribution to this volume by Emmy Herland.



danger of addressing every and nothing in human existence and its cultural manifestation.<sup>33</sup> There are, after all, noticeable differences between, on the one hand, imagination and fantasy in the Middle Ages, and the fantastic as conceived of in the Romantic era (Charles Nodier, 1780–1844), though here I refrain from entering this highly complex discussion that would require opening up a whole new chapter without us gaining many new insights for the medieval perspective of imagination. After all, the entire world of literature with its unreal, or fantastic, elements then would have to be considered, along with a vast corpus of relevant research, such as the fundamental concepts developed by Tzvetan Todorov, who probed deeply the very principles of fantasy and its uncertain hovering between imagination and the real. Both dimensions prove to be interlaced, and thus the fantastic can be described as a literary projection of another world by means of narrative elements of this real, material world: “Either total faith or total incredulity would lead us beyond the fantastic: It is hesitation which sustains its life.”<sup>34</sup> This hesitation might occur on the side of the reader/listener, or on the side of one of the characters within the text,<sup>35</sup> a process that clearly distinguishes the fantastic from the uncanny and the marvelous, such as modern-day science fiction or fairy tales.<sup>36</sup>

The cultural-historical, literary and philosophical-religious roadmap that I hope to develop here will then help us to navigate through the subsequent

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**33** See now the discussion of Charles Nodier by Elizabeth Berkebile Mcmanus, “The Fantastic in Literature,” *PMLA: Publications of the Modern Language Association of America* 134.3 (2019): 540–42, followed by a translation of Nodier’s “The Fantastic in Literature,” 542–54 (originally from 1830).

**34** Tzvetan Todorov, *The Fantastic: A Structural Approach to a Literary Genre*. Trans. from the French by Richard Howard (1970; Cleveland, IN, and London: The Press of Case Western Reserve University, 1973), 31.

**35** Todorov, *The Fantastic* (see note 34), 33.

**36** Todorov, *The Fantastic* (see note 34), 41. Oddly, Todorov ultimately claims that “psychoanalysis has replaced (and thereby has made useless) the literature of the fantastic. There is no need today to resort to the devil in order to speak of an excessive sexual desire, and none to resort to vampires in order to designate the attraction exerted by corpses: psychoanalysis and the literature which is directly or indirectly inspired by it, deal with these matters in undisguised terms” (160–61). It would lead us too far astray to engage with this claim, but in our postmodern world we might find ourselves much more aligned with medieval concepts than with the post-Freudian system. For more recent comments, see the contributions to *The Fantastic*, ed. Claire Whitehead. Critical Insights (Ipswich, MA: Salem Press, 2013); see also *Exploring the Fantastic: Genre, Ideology, and Popular Culture*, ed. Ina Batzke, Eric C. Erbacher, Linda Hess, and Corinna Lenhard. Lettre (Bielefeld: transcript, 2018). The literature on this topic is legion, without actually pertaining to the Middle Ages and the early modern age.

collection of individual contributions by a large number of scholars from different fields who all contributed to the critical exploration of imagination and fantasy in the pre-modern world. As it will become apparent quite dramatically, most historical or art-historical phenomena can be explained more easily or more thoroughly if we consider the imagination that brought about specific concepts which then translated into actions or objects. For instance, people have always dreamed about certain ideals or wishes, and have always come up with plans or intentions to carry them out in one way or the other irrespective of the high degree of improbability. We would thus really short shrift ourselves if we disregard this fundamental correlation as fundamental cultural-historical condition. So, we are really looking here at the study of medieval and early modern imagology, as it can be grasped quite directly through an examination of dreams, for instance.<sup>37</sup>

## Imagology

Normally, this theoretical approach pertains to the perception of 'the other' through the 'self,' but if we take one step further back, we realize that any perception or gaze must first be produced in the mind, where the images are created.<sup>38</sup> Even if imagology, currently little considered within the Anglophone world, might

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**37** *Imagology: The Cultural Construction and Literary Representation of National Characters: A Critical Survey*, ed. Manfred Beller and Joep Leerssen. *Studia imagologica*, 13 (Amsterdam and New York: Editions Rodopi, 2007); Waldemar Zacharasiewicz, *Imagology Revisited*. *Studia imagologica*, 17 (Amsterdam and New York: Editions Rodopi, 2010); *Imagologie heute: Ergebnisse, Herausforderungen, Perspektiven*, ed. Davor Dukić. *Aachener Beiträge zur Komparatistik*, 10 (Bonn: Bouvier, 2012); Michaela Voltrová, *Terminologie, Methodologie und Perspektiven der komparatistischen Imagologie*. *Studien zur komparatistischen Imagologie*, 2 (Berlin: Frank & Timme, 2015). As to the role of dreams, see now the contribution to this volume by Christa Agnes Tuczay.

**38** Małgorzata Świdarska, "Vielfalt oder Chaos? Einige Bemerkungen zur Terminologie der literaturwissenschaftlichen Imagologie," *Zeitschrift des Verbandes Polnischer Germanisten/Czasopismo Stowarzyszenia Germanistów Polskich* 3.2 (2014): 189–200. She notes, with respect to the imagination of the 'foreigner,' "In Anlehnung an Ricoeur verstehe ich literarisch vermittelte Bilder des Fremden als Formen zum einen der kreativen, produktiven, und zum anderen der reproduktiven sozialen Einbildungskraft, die einen utopischen oder einen ideologischen Charakter aufweisen können. Die literarischen Fremd- und Eigenbilder kommen u.a. als fremde ideologische und/oder utopische Figuren vor" (196–97; Following Ricoeur, I perceive images of the foreigner as projected in a literary text, on the one hand, as forms of a creative, productive imagination, on the other, as forms of a reproductive, social imagination that can demonstrate a utopian or an ideological character. The literary images of the self and the other appear, for instance, as foreign figures of an ideological and/or utopian character).

fall more under the category of xenology (since those images often pertain to monsters and other scary creatures, minority figures, outsiders, etc.), we can nevertheless build close connections to this school of thinking for our present project to explore imagination and fantasy.<sup>39</sup> After all, the images about other people, cultures, conditions, weapons, machines, or animals are all the product of the human mind and they exert a specific influence on individual behavior and values. We perceive the world around us as much through concrete experiences as through preconceived notions, as the entire genre of travel literature indicates so intriguingly.<sup>40</sup>

Already ancient and medieval philosophers assumed that even animals or birds have a mind on their own, and hence an imagination, even if they might not operate, as Aristotle had argued, in a rational fashion. Animals, as we can hear many times (Thomas Aquinas, Albertus Magnus), would have the cognitive power to distinguish universally, but not individually. John Buridan argued that animals would be able to learn from experience because of similarities, and Avicenna suggested that animals would have the faculty of judging estimatively or fantastically whether something is dangerous or not, whereas human being would have the power to correct their judgments and develop new insights (see, for instance, William of Ockham).<sup>41</sup> However, if we consider the large corpus of medieval literature with animals figuring there prominently, we might have to reach quite different conclusions as to medieval notions about animals' capacity to imagine and to fantasize.<sup>42</sup>

We could easily draw from many different philosophers, theologians, psychologists, linguists, and neuroscientists to examine this large topic since the human mind continues to be such a dark territory with many secrets. Many Romantic writers and thinkers, but also earlier philosophers such as Immanuel Kant (1724–1804), Edmund Burke (1729–1797), or Samuel Taylor Coleridge

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**39** Joep Leerssen (2016). "Imagology: On Using Ethnicity to Make Sense of the World," *Les stéréotypes dans la construction des identités nationales depuis une perspective transnationale*, ed. Géraldine Galéote. Vol. 10 (2016): 13–31. Online at: <https://imagologica.eu/CMS/UPLOAD/Imagology2016.pdf>; see also the excellent site: <https://imagologica.eu/> (both last accessed on Feb. 18, 2020).

**40** Reinhold Münster, *Raum – Reise – Sinn*. Vol. 1: *Idee, Subjekt, Natur*. Vol. 2: *Reisen nach Spanien* (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2012).

**41** Anselm Oelze, *Animal Rationality. Later Medieval Theories 1250–1350*. Investigating Medieval Philosophy, 12 (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2018).

**42** *Tiere als Freunde im Mittelalter: Eine Anthologie*. Eingeleitet, ausgewählt, übersetzt und kommentiert von Gabriela Kompatscher zusammen mit Albrecht Classen und Peter Dinzelsbacher (Badenweiler: Wissenschaftlicher Verlag, 2010); as to dogs, see now Albrecht Classen, "Hunde als Freunde und Begleiter in der deutschen Literatur vom Mittelalter bis zur Gegenwart: Reaktion auf den 'Animal Turn' aus motivgeschichtlicher Sicht," *Etudes Germaniques* 73.4 (2018): 441–66.

(1772–1834), would have to be mentioned here to do justice to the topic.<sup>43</sup> Hence, we would have to examine carefully the meaning of creativity and the arts, poetry, music, and other phenomena, all products of imagination and fantasy, intricately connected with or being the result of human imagination.

Modern sociologists and political scientists have discovered the importance of imagination as a meaningful category of their research, suggesting, in a variety of ways, that most of our religious, political, or ethical institutions are the result of concept that developed in the human mind, with each society or system pursuing its own ‘dreams.’<sup>44</sup> Immanuel Kant as much as Johann Gottlieb Fichte (1762–1814), Friedrich Schiller (1759–1805), Georg Friedrich Wilhelm Hegel (1770–1831), but then also Albert Einstein (1879–1955), Carl Gustav Jung (1875–1961), Jean-Paul Sartre (1905–1980), Jean Piaget (1896–1980), and many other intellectuals, scientists, and scholars deserve to be acknowledged here in support of our general observation, and then also a vast number of theologians from throughout the ages because they were all aware of the profound relevance of the human mind for cultural, and other, history.

All vices and virtues result from the workings of the mind, as we are told all the time, so we could draw, for instance, from the huge corpus of sermons written and delivered throughout the pre-modern world.<sup>45</sup> A sermon appeals to the

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<sup>43</sup> Consult, for instance, *Principles of Neural Science*, ed. Eric R. Kandel, James H. Schwartz, et al. 5th ed. (1991; New York, Chicago, et al.: McGraw Hill Medical, 2013). As to emotions, see *The Handbook of Emotions*, ed. Lisa Feldman Barrett, Michael Lewis, and Jeannette M. Haviland-Jones. 4th ed. (2008; New York and London: The Guilford Press, 2018). See, for instance, Louise Economides, *The Ecology of Wonder in Romantic and Postmodern Literature* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016); Edmund Husserl, *Ideas: General Introduction to Pure Phenomenology*, trans. W. R. Boyce Gibson (New York: Routledge, 2012); Immanuel Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgement*, trans. Paul Guyer and Eric Mathews (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000); see now Edmund Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry Into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*, ed. Paul Guyer (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015).

<sup>44</sup> C. Wright Mills, *The Sociology of Imagination* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1959); Cornelius Castoriadis *The Imaginary Institution of Society* (1975; Cambridge: Polity Press, 1987); Charles Taylor, *Modern Social Imaginaries* (Durham, NC, and London: Duke University Press, 2004); and; Fiammetta Fanizza, *The Sociological Imagination on the Horizons of Contemporary Society* (Milan: Mimesis International, 2017).

<sup>45</sup> There is much research on this topic; see now Ralf Lützelshwab, “Dominikanerprediger im Umfeld der avignonesischen Kurie,” *Bibelstudium und Predigt im Dominikanerorden: Geschichte, Ideal, Praxis*, ed. Viliam Šefan Dóci OP and Thomas Prügl. *Dissertationes Historicae*, XXXVI (Rome: Institutum Historicum Ordinis Prædicatorum, 2019), 95–125. See also the many contributions to the journal *Medieval Sermon Studies*. Cf. also Ludwig Hödl, “Repertorium der lateinischen Sermones des Spätmittelalters von J. B. Schneyer,” *Scriptorium* 53 (1999): 145–59. See now also the excellent edition and study of a very influential corpus of relevant sermons, Katrin Janz-Wenig, *Decem gradus amoris deutsch. Entstehung, Überlieferung und volkssprachliche Rezeption einer*

audience, evokes images, memory, and attempts to achieve an affect in the listeners, as Alanus ab Insulis (also known as Alain de Lille, ca. 1128–1202/1203) had formulated, like many other rhetoricians before and after him, ultimately drawing from Aristotle's *De memoria et reminiscencia*. Similarly, Thomas Aquinas observed in his commentary on this Greek philosopher's *De anima* that images of memory are the traces of visual or auditive perception in the mind. The affect can reanimate those memories and transform them into active agents.<sup>46</sup> As much as we are dealing here with prescriptive literature, as much we can recognize in those texts also excellent sources to shed more light on the mind-set of the preachers and their parishioners. Hence the necessity here to deal only with the phenomena of imagination and fantasy in the Middle Ages and early modern age, focusing mostly on literary and art-historical perspectives, with some forays into the areas of philosophy, theology, and also music.<sup>47</sup>

As we will find out, sometimes modern reflections about the human mind, as proposed by Miguel de Unamuno or Northrop Frye, can help us to sharpen our understanding also of pre-modern phenomena, discovering similarities and dissimilarities. It would be rather important as well to elucidate the theoretical concepts by Cornelius Castoriadis (1922–1997), but there is not the necessary room here to follow his excellent train of thoughts.<sup>48</sup>

## Theory of Imagination

Fantasy, or imagination, is not only fundamental for people's mental capacity, it is also an essential component of all literary texts, if not of all artistic manifestations,

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*lateinischen Predigt. Untersuchung und Edition. Texte des späten Mittelalters und der frühen Neuzeit*, 56 (Berlin: Erich Schmidt Verlag 2017).

**46** Anselm Rau, *Das Model Franziskus: Bildstruktur und Affektsteuerung in monastischer Meditations- und Gebetspraxis*. Neue Frankfurter Forschungen zur Kunst, 22 (Berlin: Gebr. Mann, 2019), 155–56. See also my review, forthcoming in *Mediaevistik* 33. Rau here draws heavily on Mary Carruthers, "Mental Images, Memory Storage and Composition in the High Middle Ages," *Das Mittelalter* 13 (2008): 63–79.

**47** Hans Rainer Sepp, *Philosophie der imaginären Dinge*. Orbis phaenomenologicus, Studien, 30 (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2017). I refrain here from engaging with the numerous pertinent webpages dealing with these issues.

**48** Nicola Condoleo, *Vom Imaginären zur Autonomie: Grundlagen der politischen Philosophie von Cornelius Castoriadis* (Bielefeld: Transcript-Verlag, 2015); for a convenient, and actually quite impressive study of his life, work, and thoughts, which also offers an extensive bibliography, see [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cornelius\\_Castoriadis#Later\\_life](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cornelius_Castoriadis#Later_life) (last accessed on Feb. 18, 2020).

although it seems extremely difficult to determine its exact nature and properties. The German critic Wolfgang Iser offers a number of important insights into this topic, which invites a critical examination of his ideas as a basis for our investigation of the erotic and other imagination in medieval and early modern literature. In particular, Iser's ruminations will provide a theoretical construct for a wide range of literary analyses that could involve both early *troubadour* poetry and Middle High German verse novellas, both the Middle English *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* and Boccaccio's *Decameron*. Much of pre-modern literature, which I want to study here from a broad comparative perspective and yet also in detailed investigations of individual texts, was deeply determined by the interest in projecting mental images and to evoke interest in the erotic.

Certainly, courtly love can be determined as a kind of performance and ritual, involving all members of the court, or members of the clergy, who formed part of the audience. At the same time, secular medieval literature, but perhaps spiritual, mystical, literature also invited the active participation of the listeners/readers and exposed them to many different levels of imagination. The term "science fiction," or "utopia," would be inappropriate, at least in most contexts, whereas "projection" and imagination would fit rather well, as I want to demonstrate in the subsequent sections of this study, especially since the early twelfth century when secular poets discovered the tremendous potential of words of love, resulting from an intriguing love of words representative of that world increasingly focused on the experience of love.<sup>49</sup>

What do we mean by imagination, or its complementary partner, fantasy, along with 'the imaginary,' as Iser prefers to call it? We need some theoretical foundations for our broad discussion, for which purpose Iser's analysis promises to yield helpful insights and further elaborations. In general, Iser emphasizes that the imaginary (*Vorstellung*) has been identified both as fantasy and as the projection of images (imagination), but also as the mental capacity to imagine that which is absent.<sup>50</sup> All these forces cannot be analyzed and/or comprehended by the logical faculties, and instead have spawned a wide

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<sup>49</sup> See the contributions to *Words of Love and Love of Words in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance*, ed. Albrecht Classen. Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies, 347 (Tempe, AZ: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2008).

<sup>50</sup> Wolfgang Iser, *Das Fiktive und das Imaginäre: Perspektiven literarischer Anthropologie* (Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 1991), 292. Subsequently, I will include the specific page references into the text to avoid cluttering the footnotes. See now the contributions to *Wolfgang Iser: A Companion*, ed. Ben De Bruyn. Companions to Contemporary German Culture, 1 (Berlin and Boston: Walter de Gruyter, 2012); cf. also David Wellbery, *Das leiblich Imaginäre: Goethe, Nietzsche, Musil*. Konstanzer Universitätsreden, 252 (Constance: Universitätsverlag Konstanz, 2016).

variety of literary discourses and approaches. Because of its ineffability, imagination has proven to be a handy terminology for various academic disciplines, including aesthetics, psychology, and even theology. Iser emphasizes, however, that the imaginary can only be comprehended in the context of the contra-factual reality, as a function of human consciousness, or mental failure.

In any case, the imaginary complements the fragmentary and transforms the shortcomings of this world, adding many opportunities to the material existence that will always be incomplete. In this sense, the imaginary is only a function and not the substance of something in existence: “sie ist dem voraus, was ist, wenngleich sie sich nur in dem, was ist, zu zeigen vermag” (294; it is ahead of that what exists, although it can manifest itself only in that what is). However, the imaginary is not subject to any control mechanisms and cannot be functionalized, although most artists and writers, among others, have tried to do just that by translating the ideas or feelings into aesthetic or literary terms. One of the reasons why people have made countless efforts to impose order and discipline on the imaginary proves to be their fear of the self-destructive forces resting within them that could be unleashed by itself.

John Locke, for instance, whom Iser cites at length, had warned of the futility, if not uselessness, of the imaginary insofar as it would not be of any relevance for those who were trying to detect, determine, or manipulate reality (297). Nevertheless, the imaginary exerts, as both Locke and Hume had then agreed, a combinatory function, bringing together even contrastive, or contradictory ideas and serving as the fundamental cohesive element for all concepts and notions in the human mind (299). Ultimately, however, there is no conclusive definition of the imaginary (“Unauslotbarkeit,” 301), unless we associate it, simply put, with a mental capacity – a formulation that goes as far back as to Aristotle. Since the eighteenth century the imaginary was attributed the power to anticipate the future and to reactivate the past, which also meant that it could recover impressions from earlier times, and re-project them in the human mind (305).<sup>51</sup>

As we will observe later, this historical perspective needs extensive corrections, especially because medieval thinkers, from Aristotle to Thomas Aquinas, explored already the fundamental significance of imagination for all forms of thinking and rational thought.<sup>52</sup> Exploring the meaning of imagination and fantasy constantly meant, especially in the pre-modern era, to investigate the faculty

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<sup>51</sup> Iser here refers, above all, to the influential discussion by Johann Nicolas Tetens, *Philosophische Versuche über die menschliche Natur und ihre Entwicklung*, Vol. I (Leipzig: Weidmann, 1777), 116 (rpt. Hildesheim: Olms, 1979), here 304–06.

<sup>52</sup> See also the contribution to this volume by Thomas Willard.

of the soul to produce images and thoughts, as Marsilio Ficino (1433–1499) and Cornelius Agrippa (1486–1535) suggested most poignantly.<sup>53</sup> The human imagination could be determined by God's messages, or it could be misled by Satan, as theologians argued vehemently throughout the centuries. Fantasy, hence could be the product of good or evil.<sup>54</sup>

The imaginary depends, to a larger or smaller extent, on external impulses, but its unique character facilitates an abstraction of the properties and circumstances characterizing the material objects perceived by the subject (308). Ultimately, this suggests that the Imaginary can succeed in transcending the individual capacities and combine them in the act of imagination to create something new (308). Imagination, then, emerges as a dynamic process involving many different forces that are conditioned by various external elements. We do not know, however, whether the imaginary is situated, or begins to exert its influence and power, where the rational reaches its own limits, or whether it is brought about, or produced, by the shortcomings of the rational itself (309).

At any case, as Iser confirms, external discourses determine the actual nature of the imaginary: "Im Zuge eines solchen Zurechtmachens werden die Diskurse zu Mythen, die eher Signaturen eines kulturellen Codes und weniger das kognitive Erfassen dessen sind, was jenseits der Erkennbarkeit liegt" (310; in the course of such an accommodation these discourses transform into myths that are rather signatures of a cultural code than the cognitive comprehension of that what lies beyond the comprehensible).

Despite these approaches to the imaginary, as Iser alerts us, this phenomenon remains ineffable, that is, imaginary, or fantastic. By the same token, all mental perception of reality can only be achieved if the imaginary contributes to this process (312), insofar as every seeing (visual perception) is to be defined, at least according to Wittgenstein, as a process of seeing something. In other words, all perception takes places not only through the realization of the actual object, but also through the imagination of all other possible objects, and only the contrast between the potential and the real facilitates the complex comprehension:

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<sup>53</sup> Verena Olejniczak Lobsien and Eckhard Lobsien, *Die unsichtbare Imagination: literarisches Denken im 16. Jahrhundert* (Munich: Wilhelm Fink, 2003); Philip M. Soergel, *Miracles and the Protestant Imagination: The Evangelical Wonder Book in Reformation Germany*. Oxford Studies in Historical Theology (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).

<sup>54</sup> Already Saint Augustine had argued that true faith was based on a clear-minded type of imagination; and Thomas Aquinas basically agreed with him in that regard; but later philosophers quickly moved away from this concept and suggested, such as Cornelius Agrippa, that imagination was mostly a form of fantasy. See the reflections about this phenomenon by Thomas Willard in his contribution to this volume.



“Wenn sich das Imaginäre als Differenz zwischen dem im aktuellen Wahrnehmen aufgerufenen Panorama inaktueller Wahrnehmungseindrücke höhlt, dann ist es selbst unbestimmt, wird jedoch gerade dadurch befähigt, die voneinander abgehobenen Wahrnehmungen bis zur Evidenz des gewärtigten Gegenstands zu bestimmen” (313; when the imaginary positions itself as difference into the panorama of non-actual perceptions, activated by an actual process of perception, then it remains undefined, but is empowered particularly through this process to determine the separate perceptions until the specific object has emerged as confirmable). In other words, the imaginary proves to be central for the entire process of perception by way of offering a contrast to the real. In the dream, for instance, as Iser emphasizes, the imaginary is present only in the form of images, but the individual has no control over those (315) because there are no intellectual, or rational, norms for the imaginary that would offer a rational framework for the identification of these images.

The imaginary is not determined through itself nor through the imagining subject, instead through the changing contexts of its effective realization (326). According to Coleridge, whom Iser cites here as well, the imaginary goes through an uninterrupted process of vacillating between intellect and nature, between destruction and construction, and between combination and dissolution, a form of a game of the human mind. When the imaginary is fixated in one image, it can be called comprehension, but when it continues to oscillate between both faculties, it can be called imagination (327), fundamentally a process of wavering (328). Drawing from Jean Paul Satre, Iser then underscores that imagination always depends on the correlation between consciousness and objects, insofar as the former cannot be determined other than through its activities (333).<sup>55</sup> Imagination forms in human consciousness through the reliance on objects, memories, and knowledge (334), and thereby projects images of the invisible, hence the imaginary. This process takes place by means of analogous comparisons that bring aspects of the unconscious to the level of the conscious. First, however, these have to pass through numerous filters because the wealth and spectrum of imagination is infinite and would overwhelm the individual subject if confronted with the totality of the imaginary (337).

The rational mind has the opportunity, or rather is faced by the need, to select according to the utility principle. Nevertheless, as soon as the control mechanisms of consciousness fade away, imagination takes over to an increasing extent and can flood the former with an endless number of images, which

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55 See also Richard Kearney, *The Wake of Imagination: Ideas of Creativity in Western Culture* (London, Melbourne, et al.: Hutchinson, 1988), 224–39.

might have scary consequences: “In die Immanenz seiner Bilder zu geraten heißt, in der Gegenwart von Abwesendem zu sein, dessen Mächtigkeit sich in dem Maße steigert, in dem das Bewußtsein von seinen Bildern fasziniert ist, die nun über die Intentionalität triumphieren, durch die sie hervorgerufen wurden” (339; to fall into the immanence of one’s own images means to be in the presence of the absent. Its power grows to the extent to which the consciousness is fascinated by its images, which now triumph over the intentionality with which they had been created).

According to Jean-Paul Sartre (1905–1980), whom Iser summarizes here as well, the imaginary represents the transcendental condition of consciousness; it does not constitute the consciousness, but manipulates the latter to a degree which makes it possible to operate in the first place (346). The world of the imaginary, however, cannot be grasped by means of rational categories, which means that the imaginary is infinite in its possibilities (348).<sup>56</sup>

Upon the question of how we gain knowledge of the Imaginary, Iser suggests, drawing from Cornelius Castoriadis,<sup>57</sup> that it consists of the dimension of the social-historical and the psyche-soma, as an expression of the anonymous collective consciousness (359), but this would not satisfy most people today. The alternative, to define the imaginary as mental images of objects that never appear in the psychic reality (363), also leaves us frustrated because of the esoteric nature of the Imaginary: “In der Vorstellung reicht die Psyche über sich hinweg in ihren Anfang, der ihr als solcher nicht durch eine fremde Macht entzogen ist, sondern deshalb, weil er als Anfang nicht ausschließlich schon Teil der Psyche ist” (364; in imagination psyche reaches beyond itself to its origin, which is removed from it not through a foreign power, but because it is, as the origin, not exclusively part of the psyche). But the imaginary requires symbols in order to become manifest (370), although there seem to many other sources for the imaginary to realize itself in human consciousness.

The imaginary does not possess a self-activating potential and is called up only when the individual pursues some specific intentions, whether consciously

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<sup>56</sup> See also Edward S. Casey, *Imagining: A Phenomenological Study* (Bloomington, IN, and London: Indiana University Press, 1976), 103–23; see also *Phantasie als anthropologisches Problem*, ed. Alfred Schöpf. Studien zur Anthropologie, 1 (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 1981); Wolfgang Iser, “The Aesthetic and the Imaginary,” *States of Theory: History, Art, and Critical Discourse*, ed. David Carroll. Irvine Studies in the Humanities, IV (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990), 201–20.

<sup>57</sup> *Gesellschaft als imaginäre Institution*, trans. Horst Brühmann (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1984). I will return to Castoriadis at the end of this study and examine his ideas there more in detail.

or unconsciously. Iser adds, however, the observation that the imaginary is receptive to all intentions, which in turn influences the activating engine as well, adding a significant moment of uncontrollability and randomness. In this regard, the imaginary would manifest itself as a form of game, though it is not identical with the game itself and only operates on that level, being independent from a controlling individual. Iser calls this type of ludic process characteristic of the imaginary an “Erzeugungsmatrix” (379; matrix of generation), insofar as the game produces countless possibilities based on the transitory nature of the images.<sup>58</sup> These images are, above all, retrieved within the world of literary fiction, though the poet or writer maintains some control over the images and integrates them into a textual structure, partly directing them to meet specific functional purposes, partly giving them free reign according to the framework of the narrative discourse. Here, however, neither the purely artificial, or fictional, element, nor the socio-political aspect dominate, whereas both collaborate to create something new, grounded in the imaginary (386–87).

In Iser’s words, “Die artifizielle Welt wird dann mit den ‘Augen’ der sozio-politischen und diese mit denen der Kunstwelt gelesen” (387; the artificial world is being read with the eyes of the socio-political world and the latter with the eyes of the artificial world). Literature, in this sense, is determined by acts of fictionalizing that are predicated on the mechanism of the game. This game almost always operates on the level of intertextuality, using text excerpts and citations from other texts and relating them all to each other. The dense interaction of contrastive and/or parallel discourses creates a wide-open field of game where semantic instability rules (389), which proves to be the basis for imagination to come into play once again. Linguistically this process implies that the spoken words no longer reveal their own meaning, but serve to imply those aspects, ideas, or emotions that are not addressed here: “Folglich ist in jedem Textsegment die Spur eines anderen gegenwärtig, und je bedeutsamer das entsprechende Segment ist, desto mehr Spuren werden sich in ihm kreuzen” (390; Consequently each text segment reveals the traces of another, and the more

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**58** It makes very good sense to view human culture through the lens of game; it is a ludic world with infinite possibilities, as medieval and early modern poets and artists have already indicated in a myriad of manners; see now the contributions to *Il gioco nella società e nella cultura dell’alto medioevo*; Spoleto, 20–26 aprile 2017. Settimane di studio della Fondazione Centro italiano di studi sull’alto medioevo, 65 (Spoleto: Fondazione Centro italiana di studi sull’alto medioevo, 2018); *Games and Gaming in Medieval Literature*, ed. Serina Patterson. The New Middle Ages (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015); *Religions in Play: Games, Rituals, and Virtual Worlds*, ed. Philippe Bornet (Zürich: Pano, 2012).

significant the respective text segment is, the more traces interlace with each other).

By opening space for the literary game, the fictional imposes formal criteria on the imaginary, yet also turns into a medium for its appearance. This process of fictionalization consists of two stages, 1. the concretization of the transgression from the real to the fictional, and 2. the transformation of the fictional into a medium of the imaginary (394). The latter, however, has the power to transform or to modify the real and creates a new identity (395), which does not necessarily imply the crossing-out of grammatical, linguistic, or lexicological fixtures, instead it affects the semantic which is now liberated and made available for the imaginary to enter the text. Ultimately, the imaginary transform the real into a potentiality (401), or as Josué V. Harari underscored, “it is fiction that actualizes the imaginary, insofar as any writer or thinker must resort to fiction in order to resolve the paradoxical situation the real imposes on him.”<sup>59</sup> In other words, fiction is the decisive medium for the imaginary to manifest itself, which assigns the literary discourse an essential function for the human existence.

Iser argues that people develop not simply out of a preconditioned model, but out of a limitless range of potentialities that are, somehow, anchored in the imaginary. Insofar as neither the profile nor the differences of these potentialities for man are given, they have to be invented beyond the limits of reality. In other words, the individual can never imagine him/herself solely as the deployment of his own self, which would represent an enormous limitation. In this sense the imaginary serves as the crucial source for the manifestation of the potential of all existence (405–06). However, this process requires the freedom of endless variations to come to the fore, which is possible through the realization and manifestation of the imaginary in the fictional discourse: “Inszenierung wäre dann die transzendente Bedingung dafür, einer Sache ansichtig zu werden, die ihrer Natur nach gegenstandsunfähig ist, und sie wäre zugleich auch ein Ersatz dafür, etwas zu erfahren, wovon es kein Wissen gibt” (406; Enactment would therefore be the transcendental condition for a matter to become visible which, according to its own nature, cannot be translated into an object. This enactment would then also be a substitution for the process, to learn something of which there is no knowledge). Iser here describes, in poignant terms, though certainly unbeknownst to himself, the curious phenomenon of mystical visions and

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<sup>59</sup> Josué V. Harari, *Scenarios of the Imaginary: Theorizing the French Enlightenment* (Ithaca, NY, and London: Cornell University Press, 1987), 61; see also Iser, *Das Fiktive und das Imaginäre* (see note 50), 401.

revelations related by many medieval and early-modern mystical writers, such as Hildegard of Bingen, Mechthild of Magdeburg, Julian of Norwich, Bridget of Sweden, Catharine of Siena, and also Joan of Arc. In other words, the imaginary, which proves to be the foundation of all literary creations, also serves as the foundation of all human existence in its spiritual dimension, which originates from the potentiality of life and transcends into the objective-real.<sup>60</sup>

Even if modern people tend to marginalize those spiritual experiences, dreams, or visions, it would be historically problematic to draw overly strong boundaries between us and the pre-modern world in that regard. Granted, in the Middle Ages the physically concrete fear of the devil as the originator of all evil, as a seducer to make people fall into sin, for instance, was much stronger than today, but this does not mean that medieval and early modern visions, revelations, prophecies, but then also fantasies, and imagination were completely different from what we experience today. The mental-historical background tends to change throughout time because of its cultural and theological grounding, but the transcendental realization as a fundamental mechanism in the human mind proves to universal and timeless, which makes the study of imagination and fantasy in the pre-modern world so relevant also for us today.<sup>61</sup>

Granted, modern science fiction movies, video games, fantasy literature, and similar products are the result of deliberate strategies by writers, movie directors, musical composers, and hence the entertainment industry. At closer analysis, however, all those media serve pretty much the same purpose as medieval visions, for example. And who is to say that people today no longer believe in miracles? The Catholic Church has canonized many individuals as saints because of miracles

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<sup>60</sup> Peter Dinzelbacher, *Vision und Magie: Religiöses Erleben im Mittelalter* (see note 18).

<sup>61</sup> Peter Dinzelbacher, *Vision und Magie* (see note 18), insists, more than many other contemporary medievalists, on the important function of psychological research also for historical documents. As the book title and the actual arguments indicate, for him the differences between religious visions and magical practices were surprisingly small in the pre-modern era. Curiously, however, he then draws a stronger line between the pre-modern and the modern era by claiming that the experiences of visions or revelations basically disappeared since the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. But he does not consider the cases of Theresa of Ávila, Jacob Böhme, Sebastian Franck, Valentin Weigel, Thomas Vaughan, Novalis, and many others. See my review in *Mediaevistik* 33 (forthcoming). As to the issue of the interlacing of miracles and magic, cf. Albrecht Classen, "The World of Miracles, Science, and Healing in Caesarius of Heisterbach's *Dialogus miraculorum* (ca.1240) in Competition with Magic," *Quidditas* 40 (2019): 90–121 (<https://rmmra.byu.edu/files/2019/10/Quidditas-40-2019.pdf>).

that had happened at their relics or graves.<sup>62</sup> It would not be possible to dismiss miracles or the belief in this phenomenon as simple projection of no validity. After all, our imagination is something that truly happens in our mind, both in the past and in the present.

To return to Iser's reflections on fictionality and imagology, the metaphor of 'free play' captures this phenomenon in a most precise fashion because it is not teleological, but processual, because it is not a concrete object, but movement itself from the potential to the real, from the Imaginary to the material.<sup>63</sup> Ultimately, for Iser this implies: "Das Spiel ist folglich die Ko-Existenz von Fiktivem und Imaginärem ... Das Spiel enthüllt sich daher als Beseitigung eines Mangels, der im Fiktiven durch das leere Visieren seiner Intentionalität und im Imaginären durch seine Formlosigkeit angezeigt ist" (408–09; The play finally consists of the co-existence of the fictional and the imaginary ... The play emerges as the compensation of a shortcoming which is indicated in the world of the fictional through the empty aiming of its intentionality and in the imaginary through its lack of form).<sup>64</sup>

## Play, Imagination, and Philosophy: Antiquity to Today

Significantly, ancient rhetoricians also dealt with the phenomenon of the imaginary, correlating it with memory. According to Cicero (106–43 B.C.E.), as Heinrich

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<sup>62</sup> The literature on this topic is legion, but see Alfred Russel Wallace, *Miracles and Modern Spiritualism* (1896; Norderstedt: Hansebooks GmbH, 2016); Geoff and Hope Price, *Miracles: True Stories of How God Acts Today* (London: Macmillan, 1995); Abhishek Mishra, *Uncommon Life* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing India, 2019); Eugene V. Subbotsky, *Science and Magic in the Modern World: Psychological Perspectives on Living with the Supernatural* (London and New York: Routledge, Taylor & Francis, 2019). See also Jürgen Beyer, "Prodigien," *Enzyklopädie des Märchens. Handwörterbuch zur historischen und vergleichenden Erzählforschung*, ed. Rolf Brednich. Vol. 10 (Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2002), 1378–88. For a useful historical and theological overview along with a helpful bibliography, see <https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wunder> (last accessed on Feb. 18, 2020).

<sup>63</sup> Iser refers to the philosophical approach to game and play in the work of Hans-Georg Gadamer, and cites the study by Richard Detsch, "A Non-Subjectivist Concept of Play – Gadamer and Heidegger versus Rilke and Nietzsche," *Philosophy Today* 29 (1985): 156–71.

<sup>64</sup> For the essential interaction between imagination, fantasy, play, and entertainment, see now my introduction and the numerous contributions to *Pleasure and Leisure in the Middle Ages and Early Modern Age: Cultural-Historical Perspectives on Toys, Games, and Entertainment*, ed. Albrecht Classen. *Fundamentals of Medieval and Early Modern Culture*, 23 (Berlin and Boston: Walter de Gruyter, 2019).

Lausberg reminds us, *memoria* consists of ideas, or thoughts (*res*), and of the linguistic formulation (*verba*). Memory, however, can be divided into a natural and an artificial memory (*naturalis memoria* and *artificiosa memoria*).<sup>65</sup> The latter relies on two instruments to achieve its goal: *loci* and *imagines*. Whereas the former category divides a known space into smaller segments, whether this space is real or imaginary, the latter fill this space, either with *res* (objects) or *verba* (words). According to Cicero (*Rhetorica ad Herennium*, 3, 20, 33), these memorial elements need to be intensified in order to have an impact, which requires that they are transformed through fantasy. This leads to the creation of images: “quoniam ergo rerum similes imagines esse oportet, ex omnibus rebus nosmet nobis similitudines eligere debemus” (526). The images need to be affective in order to fulfill their function, hence they ought to contain exceptional properties. On the basis of these images, *memoria* is being realized by way of *inventio* and *dispositio* (527).

Lausberg also examines the aspect of *mimesis*, which is closely related to imagination, consisting of sensually perceptible signs, such as painted objects (painting), sound (music), words (poetry), movement (dance), taste (cooking), smell (perfume), and touch, or the haptic (feeling through physical proximity). In difference to the rhetoric, poetry does not try to achieve persuasion (*persuasio finita*), but can even liberate itself from the topic purpose of its being, *delectare* and *docere* (555–56). “Das Kunstwerk hilft so, die Wirklichkeit zu deuten und zu bewältigen” (556; The work of art thus helps to interpret reality and to master it). Imagination and the imaginary as the essential components of the work of art, however, operate on their own, irrespective of the artist’s personal intentions, and in most cases, it would be correct to identify the artistic creation not as an object for didactic purposes; instead it proves to be the result of an artistic process (557) in which the imaginary rules all by itself.

There is no doubt, as recent critics have emphasized, that all literature is intimately connected with the erotic and serves as the basis for much of our own imagination to come into being. Thomas Anz, for instance, underscores that both the erotic and the sexual are always contained in all literary documents.<sup>66</sup> According to Friedrich Nietzsche, all human desire for art and beauty

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<sup>65</sup> Heinrich Lausberg, *Handbuch der literarischen Rhetorik: Eine Grundlegung der Literaturwissenschaft*. 3rd ed., with a foreword by Arnold Arens (1960; Stuttgart: Franz Steiner, 1990), 525 (§1083–85).

<sup>66</sup> Thomas Anz, *Literatur und Lust: Glück und Unglück beim Lesen* (Munich: C. H. Beck, 1998), 205. He also refers to Karl Groos, *Die Spiele der Menschen*. Documenta semiotica. Serie 3, Semiotik (1899; Hildesheim and New York: Georg Olms, 1973), 28. See also Egon Hansen, *Emotional Processes: Engendered by Poetry and Prose Reading*, Acta Universitatis Stockholmiensis / Stockholm Studies in Psychology, 4 (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1986);

are the result of indirect desires for the incitement of the sexual drive.<sup>67</sup> Not surprisingly, as Anz demonstrates through numerous quotes from Sigmund Freud, Bertolt Brecht, Roland Barthes, and Jacques Lacan, the reading process itself, and then the written text are regularly identified with the erotic itself because the fragmentary nature of language always keeps our desires awake and yet never completely satisfies them.<sup>68</sup> But a careful analysis of many erotic narratives easily reveals the profound dimension of sexuality treated by the authors, though hidden behind metaphoric and symbolic language. Imagination, however, is the ultimate engine driving the erotic desire.

Ambivalence and ambiguity prove to be highly effective strategies to achieve the goal of inciting sexual fantasies, or to stimulate imagination.<sup>69</sup>

A drastic variant of the carefully drafted erotic is the pornographic, but even there fantasy is called upon by way of witty allusions that allow to overcome the shameful through laughter. It might be a useless effort to distinguish between pornography and obscenity because, ultimately, the critical issue would really only concern the degree to which the imaginary is called upon and operates within the literary discourse. As Iwan Bloch, Paul Englisch, Peter Gorsens, Robert Darnton, and Andrea Dworkin, among others, have argued from many different perspectives, there ought to be definitory criteria to help

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Christiaan L. Hart Nibbrig, *Die Auferstehung des Körpers im Text*. Edition Suhrkamp, 1221 = N.F., 221 (Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 1985); Horst Albert Glaser, "Libri obscoeni – ein philologisches Divertimento statt einer Einleitung," id., ed., *Wollüstige Phantasie: Sexualästhetik der Literatur*. Reihe Hanser, 147 (Munich: Hanser, 1974), 7–24; Cora Kaplan, "Wild Nights: Pleasure/Sexuality/Feminism," Tony Bennett, Frederic Jameson et al., ed., *Formations of Pleasure*. Formations (London, Boston, et al.: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1983), 15–35.

<sup>67</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche, "Nachgelassene Fragmente 1885–1887," id., *Sämtliche Werke: Kritische Studienausgabe in 15 Bänden*, ed. Giorgio Colli (Munich: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag; Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1980), vol. 12, 9–582, here 325–26.

<sup>68</sup> "Die andauernde Suche, die unendliche Sehnsucht, das unstillbare Begehren nach etwas Abwesendem und Unerreichbarem ist ein romantisches Motiv, das, vermittelt über die Psychoanalyse Lacans, in gegenwärtigen Sprach- und Literaturtheorien fortlebt. In ihrer Sicht funktioniert die menschliche Sprache aufgrund eines Mangels: Wir versuchen mit ihr, uns abwesende Zustände, Dinge oder Personen präsent zu machen, was jedoch nie vollkommen gelingen kann. In der Unvollkommenheit der Sprache läßt sich jedoch zugleich ein Vorzug sehen: Sie hält das Begehren in ständiger Bewegung" (208; The continuous search, the infinite longing, the unquenchable desire for something absent and out of reach is a Romantic motif that continues to live, via Lacan's psychoanalysis, in the current theories of language and literature. In their view, the human language operates on the basis of a default: We are trying to make present, with the help of language, absent conditions, objects, or people, although this can never be fully achieved. This imperfection of language, however, also contains an advantage: it keeps longing in a constant motion).

<sup>69</sup> Anz, *Literatur und Lust* (see note 66), 211–13.



us in this matter, but, as Anz emphasizes correctly, citing Ludwig Marcuse's observations, all literature contains erotic, if not pornographic, material because it is predicated on the enormously influence of the imaginary.<sup>70</sup>

The erotic dimension of imagination represents only one of many aspects characteristic of this huge and limitless dimension of the imaginary. Every poet and every artist has dealt with the erotic because it constitutes one of the foundation of the imaginary and derives all its strength from it as well.<sup>71</sup> Not surprisingly, when medieval society began to experience the dramatic consequences of fundamental changes affecting almost every aspect of human life since the early twelfth century, the erotic imagination entered into the fray, if it was not the catalyst of this paradigm shift in the first place.

## Further Reflections

Human life consists not only of the daily activities, the material conditions, or the factual aspects, as relevant as they certainly are and as much as they occupy us most of the time, such as food intake and digestion, work, travel, sexuality, or family life. By contrast, in many respects, imagination, fantasy, dreams, aspirations, faith, hopes, desires, longing, fear, and spirituality have always assumed a significant role as well, subconsciously or consciously, and might actually be even more important and impactful than our ordinary life in its physical dimensions. Both birth and death remain mysteries, and so the question regarding the ultimate meaning of life, profound issues which poets, philosophers, artists, and theologians have struggled to deal with throughout time. Imagination leads to creativity without which human life would be deeply impoverished.

All of cultural history is a testimony of the enormous impact of our mind, however defined, on our material existence in every aspect of the word. It allows our creativity to come forward, which in turn transforms our lives in concrete terms.<sup>72</sup> Much has been written on the relationship between body and

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<sup>70</sup> Anz, *Literatur und Lust* (see note 66), 213–15; Ludwig Marcuse, *Obszön: Geschichte einer Entrüstung* (1962; Zürich: Diogenes, 1984), 39.

<sup>71</sup> Albrecht Classen, "The Erotic and the Quest for Happiness in the Middle Ages. What Everybody Aspires to and Hardly Anyone Truly Achieves," *Eroticism in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance: Magic, Marriage, and Midwifery*, ed. Ian Moulton. Arizona Studies in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, 39 (Tempe, AZ, and Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols, 2016), 1–33. See the other contributions to this volume.

<sup>72</sup> See the contributions to *The Nature of Human Creativity*, ed. Robert J. Sternberg and James C. Kaufman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018). Most of those studies are based on

mind, between the material and the spiritual world, but here the focus will rest on the pre-modern world and the many different manifestations of this universal dialectics. Ancient and medieval theoretical thinkers already investigated this topic deeply, and they were followed in that by countless poets and artists.<sup>73</sup>

To a large extent we could say that everything what we have called ‘history of mentality’ is actually very similar to if not tantamount to a ‘history of imagination,’ closely coupled with a ‘history of fantasy,’ insofar as belief systems, faith, maybe ‘superstition,’ rituals, practices, or ceremonies have always had a deep impact on cultural, even material history.<sup>74</sup> In order to gain a solid handle of this large topic, the following study will examine a large number of different literary, art-historical works, religious and philosophical reflections, and thus intends to lay bare what we can really say about this crucial component of medieval and early modern cultural history. I will deliberately stay away from such abstract notions about art and the spirit as developed by Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770–1831) according to whom absolute idealism is of prime importance.

what the particular arts realize in individual works of art is, according to the Concept of art, only the universal forms of the self-unfolding Idea of beauty. It is as the external actualization of this Idea that the wide Pantheon of art is rising. Its architect and builder is the self-comprehending spirit of beauty, but to complete it will need the history of the world in its development through thousands of years.<sup>75</sup>

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scientific and medical research pertaining to creativity, its roots, and processes. See also *The Cambridge Handbook of the Neuroscience of Creativity*, ed. Rex E. Jung and Oshin Vartanian (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018); from an anthropological perspective, see Edward O. Wilson, *The Origins of Creativity* (New York and London: Liveright Publishing Corporation, 2017).

<sup>73</sup> Murray Wright Bundy, *The Theory of Imagination in Classical and Mediaeval Thought*. University of Illinois Studies in Language and Literature, 12.2/3 (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1927). See now Jeffrey N. Peters, *The Written World: Space, Literature, and the Chorological Imagination in Early Modern France. Rethinking the Early Modern* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2018); Stephanie Jordans, *Innere Bilder: Theorien, Perspektiven, Analysen* (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2018). In fact, most philosophers throughout time have engaged with the question regarding the relationship between language and imagination because it constitutes a fundamental constituent of human existence. See, for example, Daniel Dor, *The Instruction of Imagination: Language as a Social Communication Technology*. Foundations of Human Interaction (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017).

<sup>74</sup> This is beautifully illuminated by Peter Burke in his survey study of how the history of culture emerged over the last decades: *What is Cultural History?* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2004). Ultimately, however, Burke deals more with the history of research than with the actual meaning of this term.

<sup>75</sup> G. W. F. Hegel, *Aesthetics: Lectures on Fine Art*, trans. T. M. Knox. Vol. 1 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), 90. These lectures were delivered in 1823, 1826, and 1828–1829. See now the

Instead, the intentions are directed toward the effort to unravel and reveal the extent to which imagination, that is, mental concepts, transpired into literary, artistic, philosophical, and religious expressions. Those expressions, in turn, allow us to gaze backwards and to comprehend the workings of the human mind at various times and locations during the pre-modern era.

Previous scholarship on imagination and fantasy has tended to excluded the Middle Ages as a historical and cultural phase during which the role of the Church dominated the human mind and which was too far removed from classical antiquity and the modern age when most of the central elements of the fantastic emerged and operated effectively.<sup>76</sup> Theoretical attempts to differentiate between the fairy tale, the courtly romance, the heroic epic, and religious narratives in terms of their specific use of the miraculous or wondrous, the fanciful or the imaginative, have proven to be rather dubious and ineffectual for the critical analysis.<sup>77</sup> The workings of God in human life, creating miracles or saints, constitute simply one aspect of what authors and artists imagined about the functions of the supra-human.

## The Perception of the Imaginary

The differences between people and giants or dwarfs, dragons or fairies in a variety of texts are only determined by the form, but not by their transcendental,

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contributions to *The Art of Hegel's Aesthetics: Hegelian Philosophy and the Perspectives of Art History*, ed. Paul A. Kottman and Michael Squire. (Paderborn: Wilhelm Fink, 2018); *The Oxford Handbook of Hegel*, ed. Dean Moyar. Oxford Handbooks (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017).

**76** Roger Caillois, "Das Bild des Phantastischen: Vom Märchen bis zur Science Fiction," *Phaicon* 1 (1974): 44–83; here 45–46.

**77** Jutta Eming, *Funktionswandel des Wunderbaren: Studien zum 'Bel Inconnu', zum 'Wigalois' und zum 'Wigalois vom Rade'*. Literatur, Imagination, Realität, 19 (Trier: Wissenschaftlicher Verlag Trier, 1999); eadem, "Mittelalter," *Phantastik: Ein interdisziplinäres Handbuch* (see note 23), 10–18. She emphasizes correctly: "Ein Element des Wunderbaren ist demnach, was im Text als solches markiert wird, ob durch Figuren- oder Erzählerrede oder andere Formen der Akzentuierung. Das Wunderbare und das Phantastische sind relationale Größen und Effekte des *discours*. In der mittelalterlichen Literatur repräsentieren sie je unterschiedliche Formen der Ästhetisierung einer Abweichung" (11; One element of the wondrous is hence what is marked as such in the text, either by way of the voice of the figures or the narrator, or through other forms of highlighting. The miraculous and the fantastic are relational aspects and effects of the *discours*. In medieval literature, they represent the respectively different forms of the aestheticization of deviation).

immaterial, imaginary character. Poets throughout time imagined something exotic in foreign countries or worlds, such as the Orient, which became a strong motif already in the Middle Ages, both in response to inspirations from classical antiquity and in response to the global efforts to come to terms with the fundamental cultural challenges to determine political and religious identity in the post-Roman period.

As Jutta Eming poignantly underscores, the perception of the miraculous or fantastic in medical, legal, philosophical, literary, or religious texts proved to be a mostly commonly shared phenomenon beyond all genres and materials, as illustrated even by architecture, sculpture (gargoyles, corbels, etc.), clothing, book illustrations, and medicine.<sup>78</sup> The reasons for the appearance of the imaginary and of fantasy in the pre-modern world certainly differed to a certain extent from those underlying the modern phenomena, but there is no doubt that the culture, literature, the sciences, medicine, law etc. in the Middle Ages were solidly determined by deeply anchored forces in the human mind which perceived the outside world according to their own ideas and notions. Religious imaginary is replete with images of the dragon, such as in the *Bamberg Apocalypse* and *Evangelistary*, from the monastery Reichenau, ca. 1010 (“The Secret Revelation to John”; see Fig. 1).

While Jutta Eming was still probing all these issues rather tentatively, suggesting that we might have to read even mystical narratives in light of the operations of our imagination, we can now take the next step and examine all those aspects more in detail and from many different academic disciplines.<sup>79</sup>

## Fairy Tales and Fantasy

Fairy tales, as we understand them today, might have been, at least globally formulated, ancient, original accounts about good and evil, insiders and outsiders, life and death, etc., orally transmitted by singers or bards in which fundamental truths, values, ideals, and concepts were relayed. Perhaps, however, it might be more appropriate to talk about simple stories from various historical

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<sup>78</sup> Eming, “Das Mittelalter” (see note 20), 12); cf. already Jurgis Baltrušaitis, *Das phantastische Mittelalter: antike und exotische Elemente in der Kunst der Gotik*, trans. from the French by Peter Hahlbrock. 2nd ed. (1955; Berlin: Mann, 1994); Francis Dubost, *Aspects fantastiques de la littérature narrative médiévale (XIIème–XIIIème siècles: L’Autre, l’Ailleurs, l’Autrefois*. Nouvelle bibliothèque du Moyen Âge, 15 (Geneva: Slatkine, 1991); Lorraine Daston and Katherine Park, *Wonders and the Order of Nature: 1150–1750* (New York: Zone Books, 1998).

<sup>79</sup> Eming, “Das Mittelalter,” *Phantastik: Ein interdisziplinäres Handbuch* (see note 77), 16–17.



**Fig. 1:** The Secret Revelation to John; Bamberg, State Library, Msc. Bibl. 140, fol. 31v  
(© Albrecht Classen)

periods that reflect archetypal themes that have resonated throughout the centuries, irrespective of how old they might have been, which cannot be easily determined anyway because they belong to the world of oral poetry.<sup>80</sup>

We can be certain that fairy tales mirror, in universal terms, human imagination and fantasy, sometimes far removed from reality, but many times set in historical, geographic, social, and political frameworks that can be recognized to some extent as more or less familiar. Very often, magic appears as a standard

<sup>80</sup> Again, the world of fairy tales represents a realm that can hardly be covered even tentatively; but see, for instance, Max Lüthi, *The Fairytale as Art Form and Portrait of Man*, trans. by Jon Erickson (1975; Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1984); see now Stefan Neuhaus, *Märchen*. UTB, 2693 (Tübingen and Basel: A. Francke Verlag, 2005).

feature in fairy tales,<sup>81</sup> and there is a normally a strong sense of a second world projected in the narratives where fundamental human concerns of a moral or ethical kind are explored in an entertaining fashion, confronting the reader/listener with ‘absolute evil’ and ‘total good,’ often drawing from the utopian genre to convey a sense of hope and confidence.<sup>82</sup>

Recent research has viewed this genre, its origin, functions, and structure much more critically and differentiated our approaches considerably, but this would not be pertinent to our discussion here.<sup>83</sup> Modern bestsellers such as J. K. Rowling’s *Harry Potter* novels (1997–2007), perhaps a more advanced type of a fairy tale on a higher, more complex level, demonstrate that the interest in and fascination with the world of fantasy continue to be cornerstones of human culture even today.<sup>84</sup> Fantasy provides entertainment because it takes the individual outside of his/her normal existence and provides creative images, characters, and actions.<sup>85</sup> This makes it possible for us to analyze, in a reverse

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**81** R. Bottigheimer, *Magic Tales and Fairy Tale Magic: From Ancient Egypt to the Italian Renaissance*. Palgrave Historical Studies in Witchcraft and Magic (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014).

**82** Marina Warner, *Once Upon a Time: A Short History of Fairy Tale* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014); Maria Nikolajeva, “Fantasy Literature and Fairy Tales,” *The Oxford Companion to Fairy Tales*, ed. Jack Zipes (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 150–54; already Jack Zipes, *Breaking the Magic Spell: Radical Theories of Folk and Fairy Tales*. Rev. and expanded ed. (1979; Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 2002) alerted us to the utopian dimension of fairy tales as part of human imagination. For a good overview of the relevant research on the relationship between fantasy and fairy tales, see now Ming-Hsun Lin, “Fantasy,” *The Routledge Companion to Media and Fairy-Tale Cultures*, ed. Pauline Greenhill, Jill Terry Rudy, Naomi Hamer, and Lauren Bose (New York and London: Routledge, 2018), 515–24. See also the solid interpretations by Maria Tatar, *The Hard Facts of the Grimms’ Fairy Tales* (1987; Princeton, NJ, and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2003).

**83** Vanessa Nunes and Pauline Greenhill, “Constructing Fairy-Tale Media Forms: Texts, Textures, Contexts,” *The Routledge Companion to Media and Fairy-Tale Cultures* (see note 82), 20–28.

**84** For the latest update on sales, translations, developments, see the well-documented website online at: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Harry\\_Potter](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Harry_Potter) (last accessed on Feb. 18, 2020).

**85** See the seminal study by Tzvetan Todorov, *The Fantastic* (1970; Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1975); see also, Cf. now *Exploring the Fantastic: Genre, Ideology, and Popular Culture*, ed. Ina Batzke, Eric C. Erbacher, and Linda Hess (Bielefeld: transcript, 2018). Cf. also the contributions to *The Cambridge Companion to Fantasy Literature*, ed. Edward James and Farah Mendlesohn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012). For the relationship between literature and fantasy, see András Horn, *Das Schöpferische in der Literatur: Theorien der dichterischen Phantasie* (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2000); for global perspectives, pursuing the entire history of European literature from Greek antiquity to the modern world, seen under the umbrella of emotions/fantasy versus rationality, see Silvio Vietta, *Literatur und Rationalität: Funktionen der Literatur in der europäischen Kulturgeschichte* (Munich: Wilhelm Fink, 2014).

order, what kind of imaginations dominated the story teller or their audiences. We do not need to, and actually hardly can do so, psychologize the texts in that process, because the critical interpretation allows us to identify concepts, ideas, values, and principles hidden in the narrative, all reflections of imagination.

## Imagination, Emotions, and Religion

People experience emotions mostly because of something imagined in the mind, mostly very freely, so if we study the various manifestations of ideas, or fantasy, dreams or hopes, we can recognize as well why certain emotions come to the fore and lead to concrete physical actions. Of course, fantasy is nothing else but just that, fantasy, but even delusions, illusions, dreams, and other psychological forces can have a tremendous impact on politics, economic decisions, the entertainment industry, and personal lives (past and present). Nationalism, populism, xenophobia, racism, anti-Semitism, fascism, communism, socialism, etc. are, broadly put, the result of collective emotions and imaginary concepts pushed by some charismatic individuals who know exactly how to draw on human fantasy and emotions for their own purposes. Or, ideology rests, first of all, in the mind and develops from there, once imaginary concepts are allowed to take on concrete form, meaning that an idea translates into action. In short, imagination and fantasy lead to concrete responses as effective elements in human beings and deserve to be studied as carefully as possible, especially because they can also be detected in all religious manifestations, translating the ineffable and apophatic into the specific word (Scripture) and then the countless paintings, sculptures, and buildings, as theological historians as Hans Urs von Balthasar have observed already many years ago.<sup>86</sup>

The overarching influence of religion especially in the pre-modern world in global terms underscores this observation quite dramatically but does not need to be explored here any further because this phenomenon has been so ubiquitous and is so deeply established. How many wars have been waged globally for religious reasons? How much suffering has been imposed on people throughout the world in the past and the present as a result of religious differences, all the result of individual experiences and emotions, such as fanaticism, religious fundamentalism, or ideological agendas. And, by the same token, how much love, education, and culture have come from religion or spiritual dreams as well?

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<sup>86</sup> Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Herrlichkeit: Eine theologische Ästhetik*. Here I consulted Vol. III.2: *Theologie*. Part 2: *Neuer Bund* (Einsiedeln: Johannes Verlag, 1969).

Much depends on the personal perspectives and experiences, but we can certainly all agree that spiritual forces exert a major influence on people and societies, motivate and energize them. Similarly, much depends on how they are channeled toward what goal and for what purpose, but who would question the impact of ideology in everyday life throughout history?

Imagination and fantasy are not limited to their own realm; instead they closely overlap with the religious and political dimension as well, or are nearly identical with them. Those concepts or notions prove to be most powerful for our analysis of many different cultural dimensions, but even many of the major reference works in history, literature, or sociology tend not to include those lemmata, as if they did not matter for historical, cultural, economic, political, or sociological analysis.<sup>87</sup>

Nevertheless, since the late nineteenth century, philosophers such as Arthur Schopenhauer, Friedrich Nietzsche, Ludwig Wittgenstein, John Dewey, and William James, who were later followed and superseded by Zygmund Bauman, Michel Foucault, Michel de Certeau, Roy Porter, and Thomas Szasz, have chiseled away at positivist history and revealed the true extent to which people construct or project their own reality, which means, in our context, how much they allow their own imagination and fantasy, jelled together in ideology, to determine their actions and behavior.<sup>88</sup> The entire field of religious sociology is centrally occupied with those questions, which we can now pursue as well from a cultural-historical perspective.<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>87</sup> The *Lexikon des Mittelalters*, vol. V (Munich and Zürich: Artemis Verlag, 1991), does not contain an entry for “Imagination,” or ‘imagination.’ Similarly, there is no lemma for “Einbildung,” as it was still called in older German. The same applies to *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe: Historisches Lexikon zur politisch-sozialen Sprache in Deutschland*, ed. Otto Brunner, Werner Conze, and Reinhart Koselleck (Stuttgart: Ernst Klett Verlag, 1975) (Vol. 2, regarding “Einbildung,” Vol. 3 [1982], regarding “Imagination”). The otherwise well-informed *Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum*, ed. Ernst Dassmann. Vol. XVII (Stuttgart: Anton Hiersemann, 1996), considers topics such as “Imagines Maiorum” (995–1016) and “Imago clipeata” (1016–41), but not “Imaginatio.” See, however, M. Taylor, “Imagination,” *Encyclopedia of Creativity*, ed. Mark A. Runco and Steven R. Pritzker. 2nd ed., vol. 1 (Amsterdam, Coston, et al.: Elsevier and Academic Press, 2011), 637–43. He offers detailed comments on “Pretend Play, Simulation and Emotion,” “Narrative, Fiction, and Testimony,” and “Mind Wandering and Mental Time Travel.” However, he is mostly concerned with child development, mental problems, adult mind processes, and culturally specific forms of imagination.

<sup>88</sup> Burke, *What is Cultural History?* (see note 74), 74–94. The notion that cultural history is always in the making continues to be the dominant scholarly paradigm today.

<sup>89</sup> Joe Edward Barnhart, *The Study of Religion and Its Meaning: New Explorations in Light of Karl Popper and Emile Durkheim. Religion and Reason*, 12 (The Hague: Mouton, 1977); Adrian Hastings, *The Construction of Nationhood: Ethnicity, Religion and Nationalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge



## Religion and Imagination (Witchcraze)

If we ignore religion as an important component of human existence, for example, we leave out of our analysis some of the most powerful emotional drives in human history that have led to amazing cultural transformations but also triggered many forms of violence, such as crusades and wars throughout history. Strikingly, hence, an imaginary force or power apparently intervenes constantly in people's lives and makes them do things they normally would never even think of in their rational mind, whether we consider the building of cathedrals and monasteries, the creation of libraries, the development of art, and the establishment of better agriculture, infrastructure, and commerce, on the positive side, or crusades, pogroms, the witch craze,<sup>90</sup> the jihad, the Inquisition, and many other forms of religious persecutions and military activities on the negative side, the evaluation of which again might be a matter of debate.

But how would we have to evaluate all those events in the past and in the present, especially if it turns out that they might have been manipulated by authorities who utilized religious fervor for their own, very secular, economic, and political interests? To highlight one extreme case, the entire early modern witch craze was deeply determined by imagination and fantasy, that is, fear, religious fervor, and desire for power based on religious authority, which had, however, deadly consequences for hundreds of thousands of innocent people.<sup>91</sup>

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University Press, 1997); *Kanon in Konstruktion und Dekonstruktion: Kanonisierungsprozesse religiöser Texte von der Antike bis zur Gegenwart: ein Handbuch*, ed. Eve-Marie Becker and Stefan Scholz (Berlin and Boston: Walter de Gruyter, 2012); David Cave, *Religion and the Body: Modern Science and the Construction of Religious Meaning*. Studies in the History of Religions, 138 (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2012); see also the contributions to *Religion in Today's World: Global Issues, Sociological Perspectives*, ed. Melissa M. Carol. Contemporary Sociological Perspective (New York and London: Routledge, 2013); for biblical perspectives, see A. Wilcox Newsom, *Rhetoric and Hermeneutics: Approaches to Text, Tradition and Social Construction in Biblical and Second Temple Literature*. Forschungen zum Alten Testament, 130 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2019). For medieval perspectives, see Susanne Dinkl, *Untote, Riesen, Zwerge und Elfen: zur Konstruktion populären (Aber)Glaubens seit dem frühen Mittelalter*. Kulturtransfer, 9 (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2017). The literature on this topic can hardly be reviewed.

**90** This is best illustrated and discussed in the catalog by Thomas Hausschild, Heidi Staschen, and Regina Troschke, *Hexen: Katalog zur Ausstellung*. 13th ed. (1979; Berlin: Verlag Clemens Zierling, 1987). Cf. also Joseph Hansen, *Quellen und Untersuchungen zur Geschichte des Hexenwahns und der Hexenverfolgung im Mittelalter* (1901; Hildesheim: Georg Olms, 1963).

**91** Hans Peter Broedel, *The Malleus Maleficarum and the Construction of Witchcraft: Theology and Popular Belief* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003); Lyndal Roper, *Witch Craze: Terror and Fantasy in Baroque Germany* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2004). This topic has been discussed from many different perspectives. See also note 4.

There were, of course, also legal, political, and economic interests hidden in the background,<sup>92</sup> but we would not do justice to this phenomenon if we ignored the superstition, the fear, the envy, the dread of the unknown, all motivating the witch hunters throughout the early modern age and all those who accused neighbors, friends, and family members of the worst forms of perpetration from a Christian perspective. For the Inquisitors and their helpers, and also for the masses of people who accepted the frenzy about the alleged threat for society at large by the devil and the witches, the notion of witchcraft was very real, the horrible outgrowth of their imagination leading in countless cases to the burning at the stake,<sup>93</sup> although in the course of time increasingly critical voices could be heard arguing against the absurdity of those charges, mostly directed at women (Martin LeFranc, Andrea Alciato, Johann Weyer, Symphorien Champier, Andrea Alciato, Bishop Antonio Venegas de Figueroa, Friedrich Spee, and others).<sup>94</sup>

Granted, many religious people might protest against such a rationalist presumption, insisting on the veracity or truth of their own faith, that is, as something factual and firm revealed to them somehow by God. For them, of course, their experience is not the result of imagination, but a revelation or epiphany that must be held as true. Nevertheless, from a scholarly perspective, we can content ourselves with the universal assessment of religion as a unique, most powerful form of imagination, producing an entire world of a spiritually-based institution, often deeply drawing from the power of an idea rendered into an image which then is translated into a text, which in turn is translated into action.<sup>95</sup>

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**92** Andreas Blauert, *Frühe Hexenverfolgungen: Ketzer-, Zauberei- und Hexenprozesse des 15. Jahrhunderts*. Sozialgeschichtliche Bibliothek bei Junius, 5 (Hamburg: Junius, 1989); *Ketzer, Zauberer, Hexen: die Anfänge der europäischen Hexenverfolgungen*, ed. id. (Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 1990); Hodayun Sidky, *Witchcraft, Lycanthropy, Drugs, and Disease: An Anthropological Study of the European Witch Hunts*. American University Studies, 11 (New York: Peter Lang, 1997); Laura Kounine, *Imagining the Witch: Emotions, Gender, and Selfhood in Early Modern Germany* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018).

**93** Kathrin Utz Tremp, *Von der Häresie zur Hexerei: "Wirkliche" und imaginierte Sekten im Spätmittelalter*. Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Schriften, 59 (Hanover: Hahnsche Buchhandlung, 2008).

**94** Lyndal Roper, *The Witch in the Western Imagination*. Richard Lectures for 1998. Studies in Early Modern German History (Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 2012).

**95** Douglas E. Cowan, *Magic, Monsters, and Make-Believe Heroes: How Myth and Religion Shape Fantasy Culture* (Oakland, CA: University of California Press, 2019); Danielle Kirby, *Fantasy and Belief: Alternative Religions, Popular Narratives, and Digital Cultures* (Durham: Acumen Publishing, 2014); Barbara Taylor, "Religion, Radicalism, and Fantasy," *History Workshop Journal* 39 (1995): 102–12; for a political analysis of this phenomenon, see James Alfred Aho, *Far-Right Fantasy: A Sociology of American Religion and Politics* (New York and

Brutal persecutions of people who advocate another faith unfortunately continue until today, amongst Christians, Muslims, Hindus, and other religions, and all those assumptions leading to individual or group violence have mostly been predicated on imaginations.

As Rachel J. D. Smith now observes, already in the thirteenth century thinkers such as Thomas of Cantimpré developed innovative theological perspectives more closely correlating the spiritual dimension of the saints with the basic human experience, all this predicated on the functions of imagination building bridges between the *signe* and the *signifié*, that means, the recognition of saints leads to the realization that they are signs who gain “significance and shape” in relation to “God, the divine res whom the saint makes manifest.”<sup>96</sup> By reading the saints “rightly, interpreting the signs, one may unite with the saint and so taste divinity” (9). As Smith then concludes, Thomas actually developed an imaginative theology which works “by way of figures (typically female) who emerge out of an inventive, if unstable, alliance between story and image” (200). Accordingly, as Smith convincingly suggests, this new hagiography involved a heavy reliance on imagination and fantasy in a semiotic sense because the ineffability and the apophatic logic of the hagiographical discourse requires, as Thomas perceived it, the heavy use of imagination to overcome this huge gap between human and spiritual epistemology. The *Life of Lutgard*, for instance, “presses against the possibility of teaching or transmitting such an experience even as it seeks to elicit the reader’s desire for such experience” (178).

Religion by itself has nothing to do with truth or facts and does not address factual, rational issues; instead, it represents, above all, a human desire to connect with another reality and a higher being, which would give the individual a

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London: Routledge, 2016); Laura Feldt, “Harry Potter and Contemporary Magic: Fantasy Literature, Popular Culture, and the Representation of Religion,” *Journal of Contemporary Religion* 31 (2016): 101–14. From a very critical perspective, see Peter Berghoff, *Der Tod des politischen Kollektivs: Moderne politische Kollektivität, Religion und das Sterben und Töten für Volk, Nation und Rasse* (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1997); see also Werner H. Ritter, *Religion und Phantasie: von der Imaginationskraft des Glaubens* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 2000). For medieval perspectives regarding the role of imagination and fantasy determining the value of rituals and practices, see Bernd-Ulrich Hergemöller, *Krötenkuß und schwarzer Kater: Ketzerrei, Götzendienst und Unzucht in der inquisitorischen Phantasie des 13. Jahrhunderts* (Warendorf: Fahlbusch, 1996).

<sup>96</sup> Rachel J. D. Smith, *Excessive Saints: Gender, Narrative, and Theological Invention in Thomas of Cantimpré’s Mystical Hagiographies*. Gender, Theory, and Religion Series (New York: Columbia University Press, 2019), 7; see also the excellent review by William Robert in *The Medieval Review* (online) 19.08.19.

sense of meaning and assurance already here on earth, while so-called facts in their physical, logical, and rational nature cannot convey this concept of identity. In face of so many different religions in this world, it seems appropriate to talk of religion as a form of spiritual construction. This does not take away anything of the deeper value and beauty of religion, but it frees us from the traditional dilemma to consider whether religion is ‘true’ or ‘not.’<sup>97</sup> It is the product of our imagination and mirrors our mind-set, so the study of medieval and early modern religion allows us, for instance, to comprehend fundamental aspects of mentality.

## The Relevance of Imagination

Consequently, as we could argue, all culture is based on fundamental assumptions, many of which of a religious kind, never verifiable or falsifiable, but requiring from its members a firm belief; otherwise their entire world might collapse because of the loss of values and ideals that make up a firm world view and world order. It is well possible that the huge differences between the pre-modern and the modern world consist of the growing awareness about this degree of constructedness since the eighteenth century or even earlier.<sup>98</sup>

We seem to live today in a mostly disenchanting world, and yet people seem to long deeply for (re-) enchantment; hence the enormous popularity of video games, internet games, science fiction, and similar genres and media. As Karl Popper has warned us, however, this trend could easily lead us, out of an amorphous and undistinguished opposition to postmodernity, to a new form of religious, maybe ideological mysticism that will only deceive and mislead us, while we still need to examine critically the true power and need of imagination.<sup>99</sup> After

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<sup>97</sup> Christine Elizabeth Hayes, *What's Divine About Divine Law? Early Perspectives* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2015); see also the contributions to *The Study of Religion and Its Meaning: New Explorations in Light of Karl Popper and Emile Durkheim*, ed. Joe Edward Barnhart. Religion and Reason, 12 (The Hague: Mouton, 1977); *Religion in Cultural Imaginary: Explorations in Visual und Material Practices*, ed. Daria Pezzoli-Olgia. Religion – Wirtschaft – Politik, 13 (Baden-Baden: Nomos, 2015).

<sup>98</sup> These thoughts might have huge implications for modern politics in light of the massive migration movement since the 2010s. See *Religion, Migration and Identity: Methodological and Theological Explorations*, ed. Martha Frederiks and Dorottya Nagy. Theology and Mission in World Christianity, 2 (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2016).

<sup>99</sup> Karl Popper, *The Open Society and Its Enemies*. Routledge Classics (1945; London and New York: Routledge, 2002), 445–50. Popper concludes, offering rather harsh criticism: “mysticism attempts to rationalize the irrational, and at the same time it seeks the mystery in the

all, there should never be a competition between rationality and imagination, and cultural historians have been more than sensitive to this critical issue. To put it bluntly, there is nothing wrong with imagination and fantasy, and there is nothing wrong with rationality and logic, all depending on the circumstances and conditions. In our human existence we need both, and we have complete access to both when we so desire. There is a time when we must rely on rational thought processes and logic, and a time when dream images and fantastic concepts about this or another world are absolutely necessary and productive.

As much as modernity has often been identified with the rise of rationality, even rationalist thinkers such as René Pascal (1623–1663) accepted that epistemology did not depend on mechanical, mathematical insights only, but also on emotions, that is, the working of the heart, with emotions being a central force driven forward by imagination: “Le cœur a ses raisons, que la raison ne connaît point: on le sait en mille choses” (The heart has its [own] reasons, which the rational mind does not know, you recognize that in million objects).<sup>100</sup> There would be much room to explore this further, but we’ll get back to this issue by way of focusing more on medieval and early modern aspects further below. But first, let us consider how people today fantasize about the past.

## Modern Fantasies and Socialist Criticism

Revealingly, today countless medieval or Renaissance fairs, tournaments, and festivities feed extraordinarily well into this need for a new enchantment because people like to play and to transform their existence into something else of a glorious kind as imagined in their mind. In other words, here we face a kind of theater where the participants can live out their dreams and fantasies. This does not mean, however, that people in the Middle Ages, for instance,

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wrong place; and it does so because it dreams of the collective, and the union of the elect, since it dares not face the hard and practical tasks which those must face who realize that every individual is an end in himself” (450). Then, however, in a more conciliatory fashion, he grants that the modern issue is to find out which is “the right faith and which is the wrong faith? What I have tried to show is that the choice with which we are confronted is between a faith in reason and in human individuals and a faith in the mystical faculties of man by which he is united to a collective; and that this choice is at the same time a choice between an attitude that recognizes the unity of mankind and an attitude that divides men into friends and foes, into masters and slaves” (450).

**100** Hans Küng, “Religion im Aufbruch der Moderne,” Walter Jens and Hans Küng, *Dichtung und Religion* (Munich: Kindler, 1985), 10–29; here 16.

were happier than we are today, perhaps because they were closer to or more intimate with their own fantasies – superstition, as the Church has always claimed. Instead, it only underscores the significance of imagination and fantasy as major factors of cultural history, with the past often serving as a staging ground for modern dream projections.<sup>101</sup> For that reason, the topics of pleasure and leisure would equally matter centrally in the larger context addressed here, while our focus rests on the spiritual dimension of the human mind.<sup>102</sup>

But let us also pursue the opposite perspective within this discourse. It seems safe to argue by now that we would have to distance ourselves in critical terms from political or ideological arguments about religion as proposed by such intellectual giants as Karl Marx (religion as opium for the people), E. B. Tylor and James Frazer (religion as systematized animism), or Emile Durkheim (spirituality as a parallel to rationality, both emerging from magic as imagination in pre-modern times) from the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, whose efforts pertained primarily to demonstrate that religion is only a function of a social system and serves alternative purposes, often hidden behind a deeply emotional screen, and hence ought to be dismissed altogether. Of course, we can be certain that religion represents a profound projection of spiritual phenomena and mirrors imagination and fantasy, whether determined by any claims on truth or not that could not be verified anyway.<sup>103</sup>

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**101** Medievalism has been the object of many recent studies; for a good overview and summary, see *The Cambridge Companion to Medievalism*, ed. Louise D'Arcens. Cambridge Companions to Culture (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016); cf. also David Matthews, *Medievalism: A Critical History* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2015).

**102** See now the contributions to *Pleasure and Leisure in the Middle Ages and Early Modern Age* (see note 64). In this regard, the present volume appears to be a logical segue and cements further the cultural-historical base, which our entire book series is trying to establish.

**103** Countless philosophers and other scholars have dedicated themselves to this question regarding the essence of religion, maybe most influentially Ludwig Feuerbach (1804–1872), who, in his book *Das Wesen der Religion* (1846) formulated meaningfully: “Die Theologie ist Anthropologie, d.h. in dem Gegenstande der Religion, den wir griechisch Theos, deutsch Gott nennen, spricht sich nicht anders aus als das Wesen des Menschen” (Theology is anthropology, that is, in the object of religion, which we call in Greek ‘theos,’ in German ‘Gott,’ nothing else finds its expression but the essence of the human being). Here quoted from [https://www.aphorismen.de/suche?f\\_autor=1256\\_Ludwig+Feuerbach](https://www.aphorismen.de/suche?f_autor=1256_Ludwig+Feuerbach) (last accessed on Feb. 18, 2020). See also Ludwig Feuerbach, *Das Wesen der Religion: ausgewählte Texte zur Religionsphilosophie*. Intro. and ed. by Albert Esser (Hologne: Hegner, 1967). See also <https://www.gottwein.de/Eth/RelKr02.php>; see also Todd Gooch, “Ludwig Andreas Feuerbach,” *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, 2013, rev. 2016, online at: <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/ludwig-feuerbach/> (both last accessed on Feb. 18, 2020).

## Spirituality

Our purpose in this book, however, has nothing to do with the sociological or political evaluation of religion or spirituality; what matters here is only that religion has always played a major role in human life and as such sheds important light on people's minds, that is, their interiority, their soul, or inner spirit.<sup>104</sup> Yet, Thomas Merton deserves to be quoted here as well because of his crystal-clear formulation of the fundamental issue at play in this regard: "The words and acts that proceed from myself and are accomplished outside myself are dead things compared with the hidden life from which they spring. These acts are transient and superficial ... But the soul itself remains. Much depends on how the soul sees itself in the mirror of its own activity."<sup>105</sup> When we probe the meaning of imagination in the sphere of religion, the issue is not at all whether there is a God or not; instead, we must ask ourselves why, how, and in what way people have projected images of God outward, which might be a fantasy or truth. Religion as a phenomenon or social institution has always been a fact of life, but here we investigate the origin of this projection, which rests somehow in the human mind, irrespective of prophecies, epiphanies, visions, revelations, or mystical encounters.

As Walter S. Melion emphasizes, "images held a privileged place, since they were themselves appreciated as mediating *vincula* par excellence, that is, media that appealed equally to man's earthly and divine powers – his motive and perceptual faculties on the one hand (associated with the sensitive soul), his rational faculties on the other (associated with the intellective soul)."<sup>106</sup> In many, if not most, cases, medieval art intended to "make the soul aware of its spiritual condition and desirous of conforming itself to God, by inspiring it to consider how the soul's relation to Christ, the *imago Dei*, is like that of an

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**104** See the contributions to *Image and Imagination of the Religious Self in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe*. Emory University, *Lovis Corinth Colloquia I*, ed. Reindert Falkenburg, Walter S. Melion, and Todd M. Richardson. Proteus: Studies in Early Modern Identity Formation, 1 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2007).

**105** Merton, *No Man is an Island* (see note 7), 118. He elucidates this observation further by saying: "The soul that projects itself entirely into activity, and seeks itself outside itself in the work of its own will is like a madman who sleeps on the sidewalk in front of his house instead of living inside where it is quiet and warm. The soul that throws itself outdoors in order to find itself in the effects of its own work is like a fire that has no desire to burn but seeks only to go up in smoke" (ibid.).

**106** Walter S. Melion, "Introduction: Meditative Images and the Psychology of Soul," *Image and Imagination of the Religious Self* (see note 104), 1–36; here 2.

image to its original, of a likeness to the thing it is like.”<sup>107</sup> Considering the amazing fascination with the soul in the twentieth and twenty-first century, in utter disregard of the contemporary technological, robotic, and digital transformation of our existence, it does not come as a surprise that such medieval statements deeply resonate with modern readers once again, that is, those searching for the origin of their own imaginations and identity in the spiritual.<sup>108</sup>

The image of Christ, or of a saint, a martyr, an angel, or of God Father Himself, was supposed to be perceived through the faculties of sense, memory, reason, and will, and through the process of imitating meditation, as discussed quite explicitly by the authors of the *Grote evangelische Peerle* (1538), Ludolphus of Saxony's *Vita Christi* (1474), and the *Afbeeldinge van d'eerste eeuw der Societeyt Jesu* (1640), all discussed by Melion.<sup>109</sup> Art historians have regularly and consistently referred to the process of ‘reading’ when analyzing a work of art, which pertains to the rational approach (Meyer Schapiro, E. H. Gombrich, Heinrich Wölfflin, Emile Mâle, Edgar Wind, Michael Baxandall, et al.).<sup>110</sup> Aesthetic aspects point the way toward imagination, and art works are best understood as the material visualization of the spiritual or imaginary world, entities, values, ideas, or God.<sup>111</sup>

## Religion, Literature, and Imagination

Following the theoretical explorations of hermeneutics by Hans-Georg Gadamer, a number of art historians have embraced the idea of art works as processual expressions in stone, paint, or glass. By interacting with an altarpiece, for instance, the viewer is invited, if not required, to perceive the imaginary dimension behind it, the spiritual message. It makes good sense, therefore, to talk about the image

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**107** Melion, “Introduction” (see note 106), 3.

**108** Kocku von Stuckrad, *Die Seele im 20. Jahrhundert: Eine Kulturgeschichte* (Paderborn: Wilhelm Fink, 2019).

**109** Melion, “Introduction” (see note 106), 3–21, et passim. He also highlights the notion “that man, made in God’s image and likeness, is the mirror of divinity, just as Christ, the *imago Dei*, is the mirror of perfected humanity” (32).

**110** Elizabeth Sears, “‘Reading’ Images,” *Reading Medieval Images: The Art Historian and the Object*, ed. eadem and Thelma K. Thomas (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2002), 1–7.

**111** See the contributions to *Bild und Text im Mittelalter*, ed. Karin Krause and Barbara Schellewald. Studien zur mittelalterlichen Kunst, 2 (Cologne, Weimar, and Vienna: Böhlau, 2011); cf. also Michael Camille, *The Gothic Idol. Cambridge New Art History and Criticism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989).



“als Ereignis” (as an event).<sup>112</sup> Images of mystical experiences, such as the Annunciation, or Christ’s Passion, and the many encounters between medieval women (and some men) and Christ Himself, or saints, speak directly to the viewer and ask for a response, as Martin Heidegger had already outlined from a philosophical point of view in his famous *Sein und Zeit* (1927).<sup>113</sup>

What would be the difference between religion and superstition, for instance, and how did that play out in the visual arts in past and present?<sup>114</sup> Both fields are deeply determined by imagination, and they compete, of course, for public recognition, as if faith could be clearly distinguished from fantasy. The dominant religion tends to call all other forms of faith represented by minority groups as superstition and insists on the veracity and truth of its own dogma.<sup>115</sup>

In essence, however, the differences between Anglo-Saxon and Old High German charms on the one hand, for instance, and Christian prayers on the other prove to be rather minimal, especially since both ‘genres’ aim at an imaginary sphere where a higher power rests and which might be reachable by means of ritually spoken or written words.<sup>116</sup> Ultimately, then, the specific appropriation

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**112** See the contributions to *Das Bild als Ereignis: Zur Lesbarkeit spätmittelalterlicher Kunst mit Hans-Georg Gadamer*, ed. Dominic E. Delarue, Johann Schulz, and Laura Sobez (Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag Winter, 2012).

**113** Martin Gessmann, “Die Hermeneutik und ihre Zukunft: Vom Text zum Bild zur Praxis,” *Das Bild als Ereignis* (see note 112), 83–101.

**114** See, for instance, Doris Ruhe, *Gelehrtes Wissen, “Aberglaube” und pastorale Praxis im französischen Spätmittelalter: Der Second Lucidaire und seine Rezeption (14.–17. Jahrhundert). Untersuchung und Edition*. Wissensliteratur im Mittelalter, 8 (Wiesbaden: Reichert, 1993); *Volksreligion im hohen und späten Mittelalter*, ed. Peter Dinzelsbacher. Quellen und Forschungen aus dem Gebiet der Geschichte, 13 (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 1990); Claude Lexouteux, *Geschichte der Gespenster und Wiedergänger im Mittelalter* (Cologne: Böhlau, 1987).

**115** *The Religion of Fools?: Superstition Past and Present*, ed. Stephen Anthony Smith. Past and Present: Supplements. New Series, 3 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008); Euan Cameron, *Enchanted Europe: Superstition, Reason, and Religion, 1250–1750* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010); Antonio Garrosa Resina, *Magia y superstición en la literatura castellana medieval* (Valladolid: Universidad de Valladolid, Secretariado de Publicaciones, 1987); see also the contributions to *Everyday Magic in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Kathryn A. Edwards (Farnham: Ashgate, 2015). See also Robin Melrose, *Magic in Britain: A History of Medieval and Earlier Practices* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland and Company, 2018).

**116** Albrecht Classen, “Zaubersprüche, Beschwörungen und andere Formen des ‘Aberglaubens.’ Kulturhistorische Betrachtungen für den Literatur- und Sprachunterricht,” *Unterrichtspraxis* 29.2 (1996): 231–39; id., “Old High German Missionary Activities by Means of *Zaubersprüche* – Charms. Anthropological-Religious Universals in the Early Middle Ages,” *Kościół w dobie chrystianizacji (Churches in the Era of Christianization)*, ed. Mariana Rędkowskiego. Wolińskie Spotkania Mediewistyczne III (Szczecin/Stettin: Institute of Archaeology and Ethnology, Department of Archaeology, 2016), 77–88; Chiara Benati, “Against the Dangers of Travel: Journey Blessings and

of textual documents by one or the other religious group seems to be irrelevant, whereas the critical issue can be determined to be realization that those words in a religious text aim for establishing bridges between the material and the spiritual world and give substance to religious imagination. In terms of imagination, hence, there are no differences between religion and superstition; the latter being nothing but a pejorative term for an alternative religion, driven by a different set of imaginations.

Virtually all art products throughout time have served as representatives or reflections of human imagination, offering visual elements that mirror material and non-material conditions. However, artists and art historians, theologians and philosophers have argued about the actual role of the artistic manifestation of the divine, or its possibility in the first place. Religious art has often been challenged by iconoclasts, both in the Christian and the Islamic cultures, among others. As despicable as iconoclasm might be for us today, we can recognize here the same struggle pertaining to the role of imagination and fantasy. Can God be depicted in the first place, and would it be allowed? In the Hebrew Bible (Old Testament), we learn several times that the first person was made in the image of God (Gen 1:26–28; Gen 5:1–3; Gen 9:6). However, we are also informed that people should not make images of God (Ex. 20:4–6; Deut. 16:22; Lev. 26:1; Ps. 97:7), but what would religion mean if there were not at least concepts of God, or gods?

The fight over images in religion has clearly separated Christians and Muslim, and Catholics and Protestants, etc. from each other throughout times.<sup>117</sup> Fighting bitterly over this, the question of what images deserve to occupy our minds and which ones, if any at all, not, especially in the case of God, remains unanswerable. As Charles Barber notes,

the divine nature, which deserves adoration, can never be depicted, as it is essentially without dimension. On the other hand, if the divine nature adopts dimension by becoming

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Amulets in the Medieval and Early Modern Germanic Tradition,” *Travel, Time, and Space in the Middle Ages and Early Modern Time: Explorations of Worldly Perceptions and Processes of Identity Formation*, ed. id. Fundamentals of Medieval and Early Modern Culture, 22 (Berlin and Boston: Walter de Gruyter, 2018), 120–64; Ciaran Arthur, “Charms”: *Liturgies, and Secret Rites in Early Medieval England*. Anglo-Saxon Studies, 32 (Woodbridge, Suffolk: The Boydell Press, 2018); see also James Alexander Kapaló, *The Power of Words: Studies on Charms and Charming in Europe* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2013).

<sup>117</sup> Alain Besançon, *The Forbidden Image: An Intellectual History of Iconoclasm*, trans. Jane Marie Todd (1994; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000); See also the contributions to *Iconoclasm from Antiquity to Modernity*, ed. Kristine Kolrud and Marina Prusac (Farnham, Surrey, and Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2014).

incarnate, it not only now becomes open to the possibility of depiction, but must, because of assuming the limits of dimension and depiction, only be worshipped relatively.<sup>118</sup>

Our aesthetic conditions rely centrally on fantasy, and many events in human history originated from ideas, feelings, hopes, expectations, sentiments, and other sensations. Mind matters often more than the physical existence or the material constraints, irrespective of the cultural and historical context. Without imagination, human life would be deeply impoverished. As Peter Murphy, Michael A. Peters, and Simon Marginson now suggest regarding humanity at large,

We are the imaginative species that lives metaphorically. This is a strange condition. What it means is that human beings ‘act’ in pursuit of meaning, rather than ‘react’ out of instinct as other species do. The imagination is the obverse of animal instinct. Where the imagination is reflexive, instinct is a reflex. Instinct is a response to internal and external stimuli ... But human beings are not only reactive in their behavior. To the course of their natural history, and its eventual peculiar interweaving with social history, human beings developed cognitive feelings. These feelings regulate human interventions into the world. They animate the human ability to create a second nature. This second nature, humankind’s own constructed environment, does not replace first nature but rather exists sometimes happily and sometimes not so happily in tandem with it. Cognitive feelings draw human beings into shaping and directing, constructing and reconstructing, and on occasions destroying the world around them.<sup>119</sup>

In fantasy literature and art, to use a primarily modern terminology, magic often plays a major role, which was not at all limited to the Middle Ages, as the ever-growing corpus of modern video and online games has richly confirmed.<sup>120</sup>

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**118** Charles Barber, “On Cult Images and the Origins of Medieval Art,” *Intellektualisierung und Mystifizierung mittelalterlicher Kunst: “Kultbild”: Revision eines Begriffes*, ed. Martin Büchsel and Rebecca Müller Neue Frankfurter Forschungen zur Kunst, 10 (Berlin: Gebr. Mann Verlag, 2010), 27–40; here 38.

**119** Peter Murphy, Michael A. Peters, Simon Marginson, *Imagination: Three Models of Imagination in the Age of the Knowledge Economy* (New York, Washington, DC, et al.: Peter Lang, 2010), 2–3. As the title suggests, of course, they do not pursue neuroscience or cultural history, but develop models pertaining to the functionality of imagination in the postmodern world, in business, politics, and education, etc.

**120** Kevin Moberly and Brent Moberly, “Nine Men’s Medievalisms: Conquests of the Longbow, Nine Men’s Morris, and the Impossibilities of a Half-Forgotten Game’s Ludic Past,” *Pleasure and Leisure in the Middle Ages and Early Modern Age* (see note 64), 695–734. For early modern history of imagination, see Karl Bell, *The Magical Imagination: Magic and Modernity in Urban England, 1780–1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012). See also the contributions to *Magic and Magicians in the Middle Ages and the Early Modern Time: The Occult in Pre-Modern Sciences, Medicine, Literature, Religion, and Astrology*, ed. Albrecht Classen. Fundamentals of Medieval and Early Modern Culture, 20 (Berlin and Boston: Walter de Gruyter, 2017).

Fantasy as a modus for the production of texts and art does not have to rely on coherence, historical facts, logic, rationality, and natural laws and thus can give free reign to imagination, which sounds like a banal truth, yet matters centrally for all human creativity, religion, and the arts and deserves to be highlighted here once again.<sup>121</sup> Thus, there are suddenly significant parallels between, for instance, Romanesque capitals, late Gothic depictions of purgatory and hell, early modern concepts of witches, and modern fairy tales. The idea in our mind determines reality, or creates it by itself. This might be a banal observation since all our mental categories are aligned with the reality outside of our bodies, but we must never forget the great impact which those ideas have always had on the perception of that reality. Hell was hardly mentioned in the New Testament, but there are plenty of apocryphal texts and profane narratives that allow us to extract a whole ‘geography of the afterlife,’ whether we consult Isidore of Seville or Cassiodor, Hugh of St. Victor or Honorius Augustodunensis.<sup>122</sup>

Considering the numerous depictions of *inferno* both in pictures and texts throughout the pre-modern world, especially the discussion of the punishments of the sins in the afterlife, as often presented by mystical writers such as Bridget of Sweden (originally: Birgitta Birgersdotter, ca. 1307–1372), we also recognize the dark side of human imagination, filled with horror, terror, masochism, sadism, and perversity. The invention of purgatory as a space either before hell or between hell and paradise at the end of the twelfth century, offered additional momentum to allow imagination to go rampant.<sup>123</sup> Most famously, Marie de France, for instance, composed her powerful *Le Purgatoire de Saint*

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**121** Ruth M. J. Byrne, *The Rational Imagination: How People Create Alternatives to Reality*. A Bradford Book (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2007); see also the contributions to *Religion – Imagination – Ästhetik: Vorstellungs- und Sinneswelten in Religion und Kultur*, ed. Lucia Traut and Alexandra Grieser. Critical Studies in Religion, Religionswissenschaft, 7 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2015).

**122** Hans-Werner Goetz, “Das Weltbild des frühen und hohen Mittelalters zwischen biblischer Autorität und ‘profaner’ Bildung,” *Die Welt und Gott – Gott und die Welt? Zum Verhältnis von Religiosität und Profanität im “christlichen Mittelalter”*, ed. Elisabeth Vavra. Interdisziplinäre Beiträge zu Mittelalter und früher Neuzeit, 9 (Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag Winter, 2019), 13–73; here 65–71. He offers also a reproduction of one of the most dramatic depictions of hell in the *Psalter of Henry of Blois*, Winchester, British Library, Cotton ms. Nero C.IV. fol. 39r (middle of the twelfth century), here p. 72. See now the contributions to *A Companion to Twelfth-Century Schools*, ed. Cric Giraud. Brill’s Companions to the Christian Tradition, 88 (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2020).

**123** Jacques Le Goff, *The Birth of Purgatory* (1984; University of Chicago Press 1986; orig. in French as *La naissance du Purgatoire*, 1981).

*Patrick* at that time, projecting a very specific geographic location where it was situated.<sup>124</sup>

Sermons by ordinary clerics and visionaries or revelations by medieval mystics offer a broad spectrum of images reflecting the deeply-seated fear of sexuality (incest, rape, marital sex, or simply adultery, or a lack of chastity [sex with the marriage partner on a holiday], etc.). As Peter Dinzelbacher now alerts us, even a very modest or careful application of Freudian or Jungian readings, or simply a close examination of many of the mystical texts, allows us to gain direct insight into the frightened minds of many medieval writers, especially by mystical women, who engaged extensively with extremely negative images of sex, either already during their married life, or after the husband had deceased.<sup>125</sup> At the same time, throughout the pre-modern age, many writers, from Saint Augustine to the German Jesuit and universalist, Athanasius Kircher (1602–1680), firmly believed in an underworld in geophysical terms, not to be confused with hell, but a realm where dwarfs or green children lived.

As Scott G. Bruce now observes, “While the idea of an infernal underworld dominated the premodern subterranean imagination, beginning in the twelfth century stories featuring underworld inhabitants also appeared in collections of wonders and in works of hagiography.” And he concludes, by connecting this type of medieval imagination, with modern-day science fiction and fantasy literature, such as by Jules Verne, Edgar Rice Burrough, and C. S. Lewis: “medieval people were not simply slavish imitators of ancient authorities about the netherworld. Instead, they propelled their imaginations into the depths of the earth to lend marvel, menace, and meaning to stories whose power to enthrall readers remains undiminished all of these centuries later.”<sup>126</sup> Keagan Brewer also emphasizes that although there were many types of wonder reported about in the Middle Ages, people’s responses differed widely, from firm belief to serious skepticism. Both the Marvels of the East or accounts of monsters were met with astonishment, amazement, puzzlement, but were also viewed critically and with suspicion, as the significant differences between the famous

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124 Marie de France, *Le Purgatoire de Saint Patrick accompagné des autres versions françaises en vers et du Tractatus de Purgatorio Sancti Patricii de H. de Saltrey*, ed. Myriam White-Le Goff. Champion Classiques. Série “Moyen Âge” (Paris: Champion Classiques Honoré Champion, 2019).

125 Peter Dinzelbacher, “Das sexuelle Verhalten im Mittelalter II: Steuerung durch religiöse Angst – am Beispiel italienischer Visionstexte,” *Mediaevistik* 32 (forthcoming).

126 Scott G. Bruce, “*Sunt altera nobis sidera, sunt orbes alii*: Imagining Subterranean Peoples and Places in Medieval Latin Literature,” *Mediaevistik* 32 (forthcoming).

accounts first by Marco Polo and then by the armchair traveler John Mandeville indicate.<sup>127</sup>

As Geoffrey Chaucer notes in his *The Man of Law's Tale* (ca. 1387), we do not need physical eyes to see because our imagination can substitute for them. Talking about three men, the narrator observes about one of them, "That oon of hem was blynd and myghte nat see, / But it were with thilke eyen of his mynde / With whiche men seen, after that they ben blynde" (551–53).<sup>128</sup> Although he cannot see in material terms, he can see with his mind and thus brings to light the truth that Lady Hermengyld is a Christian and can create the wonder of mysterious healing. Observing this miraculous event, which is directly based on Christ's healing of the blind man Bethsaida (Mark 8:22–26), Hermengyld's husband, the Constable, being instructed by Constance about the power of the Christian religion, converts as well. Faith, i.e., the inner eye, or imagination, trumps physical reality, which Cicero (106–43 B.C.E.) had already explored in his reference to *mentis oculi*, though he encouraged future orators to use concrete physical references for ideas to help the audience grasp the essential concepts more easily.<sup>129</sup>

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**127** Keagan Brewer, *Wonder and Skepticism in the Middle Ages*. Routledge Research in Medieval Studies, 8 (London and New York: Routledge, 2016); Albrecht Classen "Marco Polo and John Mandeville: The Traveler as Authority Figure, the Real and the Imaginary," *Authorities in the Middle Ages: Influence, Legitimacy, and Power in Medieval Society*, ed. Sini Kangas, Mia Korpiola, and Tuija Aionen. Fundamentals of Medieval and Early Modern Culture, 12 (Berlin and Boston: Walter de Gruyter, 2013), 239–48.

**128** *The Riverside Chaucer*, ed. Larry D. Benson, based on *The Works of Geoffrey Chaucer*, ed. by F. N. Robinson, reissued as a paperback (1987; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008). The number of studies on Chaucer are legion, but see now Alexander N. Gabrovsky, *Chaucer the Alchemist: Physics, Mutability, and the Medieval Imagination*. The New Middle Ages (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015). See also Nicholas Watson, "Christian Ideologies," *A Companion to Chaucer*, ed. Peter Brown. Blackwell Companions to Literature and Culture (Oxford and Maldon, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 2000), 75–89, for a broader overview of Chaucer's attitude toward religion. see John Bugbee, *God's Patients: Chaucer, Agency, and the Nature of Laws* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2019), who argues, for instance, "every coherent medieval account of human agency ... depends in some way on an account of how to think about God's agency" (113). He extensively draws from the religious ideas developed by Thomas Merton, who has also influenced my thinking in this study. See now the review by Conrad van Dijk in *The Medieval Review* 19.09.28.

**129** Cicero, *De oratore*, ed. Pietro Li Causi. Testo latino a fronte (Alessandria: Ed. dell'Orso, 2015), Liber III: XLI: 163.

## The Fanciful Medieval Manuscript

Intriguingly, as I will outline further below, we find numerous examples of fantasy products already in illuminated manuscripts from the Middle Ages, where countless marginal drawings document how much the artists and scribes enjoyed considerable freedom to embellish their work with fanciful figures, animals, plants, fruit, and grotesque features.<sup>130</sup> Some scholars have already begun to investigate the correlation of plants and people, but then mostly in modern times. Medieval artists and poets, however, demonstrated already an astonishing openness to the aesthetics of botanical epistemology.<sup>131</sup> Books of hours, for instance, were primary targets for this fanciful and imaginative approach to the embellishments of religious texts. The most famous example might be the Book of Hours created for Mary of Burgundy from ca. 1477 where the marginal drawings almost equally share the pages with the text.<sup>132</sup> This late Gothic art certainly did not intend to undermine the spiritual experience conveyed by the central image, but these so-called *drôleries* served as reminders of the natural and unnatural world, as the viewer was supposed to imagine.<sup>133</sup>

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**130** Most famously, see Michael Camille, *Image on the Edge: The Margins of Medieval Art* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992); id., *Mirror in Parchment: The Luttrell Psalter and the Making of Medieval England*. Picturing History (London: Reaktion Books, 1998). See also the contributions to *Nordiska studier i medeltidens konst*, ed. Kersti Markus (Tallinn: Argo, 2002); *Signs on the Edge: Space, Text and Margin in Medieval Manuscripts*, ed. Sarah Larratt Keefer. Mediaevalia Groningana, N.S., 10 (Paris et al.: Peeters, 2007).

**131** For some preliminary investigations, though they do not yet take us very far, see the contributions to *Monde animal et végétal dans le récit bref du Moyen Âge: Colloque international 2016*, ed. Hugo O. Bizzarri. Scrinium Friburgense, 39 (Wiesbaden: Reichert Verlag, 2018). Most authors focus on animals, some of them on natural spaces, but neither plants as such nor the dimension of imagination are truly addressed here. See, however, Roland Bechmann, *Des arbres et des hommes: La forêt au Moyen Âge* (Paris: Flammarion, 1984); Albrecht Classen, *The Forest in Medieval German Literature: Ecocritical Readings from a Historical Perspective*. Ecocritical Theory and Practice (Lanham, Boulder, et al.: Lexington Books, 2015).

**132** *Das Stundenbuch der Maria von Burgund: Codex Vindobonensis 1857 der Österreichischen Nationalbibliothek*. Kommentar von Franz Unterkircher. Glanzlichter der Buchkunst, 3 (Graz: Akademische Druck- und Verlagsanstalt, 1993).

**133** Albrecht Classen, "Rural Space in Late Medieval Books of Hours: Book Illustrations as Looking-Glass into Medieval Mentality and Mirrors of Ecocriticism," *Rural Space in the Middle Ages and Early Modern Age: The Spatial Turn in Premodern Studies*, ed. Albrecht Classen, with the collaboration of Christopher R. Clason. Fundamentals of Medieval and Early Modern Culture, 9 (Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2012), 529–59. See also Jean Wirth, together with Isabelle Engammare et al., *Les Marges à drôleries dans les manuscrits gothiques (1250–1350)*, ed. Jean Wirth. Matériaux pour l'histoire, 7 (Geneva: Droz, 2008).

Many times, the major initials in a text were also filled with figures, and sometimes it seems almost difficult to decide whether the margin or the center dominate. To be sure, these medieval illuminated manuscripts mirror imagination and fantasy in a sometimes almost bizarre way, but we have to be careful and should not draw unsupportable conclusions regarding seeming surrealism on those parchment pages. For medieval artists and viewers, even the most grotesque and seemingly absurd figure or form carried meaning and directed the observer/reader/listener back to the spiritual dimension.<sup>134</sup> Nevertheless, we must not ignore the fact that already medieval artists had a clear understanding of the fantastic and successfully combined it with the Christian teachings.<sup>135</sup> We can always discover, in the corners, in the predella, in the background, and elsewhere in medieval paintings, frescoes, or sculptures small but meaningful elements, figures, or creatures that do not conform with the stereotypical paradigm normally imposed by the Church authorities, or patrons.

Of course, nothing in those manuscripts was without meaning, and everything aimed for spiritual enlightenment, even if it seems difficult at times to grasp the specific intentions and strategies behind those quite often rather confusing images. We are here not dealing with a 'stream of consciousness,' or chaotic products of fantasy, as modern art often explores. Instead, behind even the most astounding or puzzling marginal drawing there is a sense of cosmos created by and subordinated under God.

The *Wingfield Hours and Psalter* from ca. 1440, today in the New York Public Library, for instance, contains a marvelous leaf depicting a dancing fool in front of a highly vivacious landscape (Part II, fol. 38r). The image itself, however, is framed by a wide filigree border populated with a rich smattering of flowers, berries, two deer, leaves, and vines.<sup>136</sup> Each element invites close inspection, and we are supposed to detect behind the seemingly chaotic display the cosmic order, especially if we consider that the figure of the fool probably served as a mirror of the spectator him/herself in order to humble the subject in the face of God. We must not get confused with the appearance of a fool in

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**134** This is most dramatically illustrated in the early medieval Irish manuscripts, such as the famous *Book of Kells*; cf. Albrecht Classen, "The Book of Kells – The Wonders of Early Medieval Christian Manuscript Art Within a Pagan World," to appear in *Mediaevistik* 32.

**135** Hans Jacob Orning, *The Reality of the Fantastic: The Magical, Political and Social Universe of Late Medieval Saga Manuscripts*. The Viking Collection (Odense: University Press of Southern Denmark, 2017).

**136** Jonathan J. G. Alexander, James H. Marrow, and Lucy Freeman Sandler, with the assistance of Elizabeth Modey and Todor T. Petev, *The Splendor of the Word: Medieval and Renaissance Illuminated Manuscripts at The New York Public Library* (New York: The New York Public Library/Harvey Miller Publishers, 2005), 229.



such a religious manuscript, and instead need to keep in mind that here the artist/s projected the wide scope of spiritual imagination as was common throughout the Middle Ages.

After all, if we turn to many other examples, such as the miniatures by the Master of Jeanne de Laval (ca. 1460), we observe exactly the same projection of fantastic backgrounds, with plants, leaves, fruit, and vines surrounding the religious setting of the “Crowning of the Virgin” (*Book of Hours*, NYPL MA 34, fol. 621).<sup>137</sup> Rational comprehension would not be possible, and would also not be expected because divine order cannot be grasped with the help of the human mind, which also finds significant parallels in many medieval and early modern narratives, such as those by Marie de France (“Eliduc”), Boccaccio (*Decameron*), Heinrich Kaufringer (“Die unschuldige Mörderin”), or Miguel de Cervantes (*Don Quixote*).<sup>138</sup>

Hence, it does not come as a surprise that we also encounter all kinds of grotesque figures, if not monsters, such as in the *Book of Hours*, NYPL Spencer 43, fols. 54v (Visitation) and fol. 77r (Presentation in the Temple).<sup>139</sup> Another example would be the drawing of a putto with a dromedary at the bottom of a folio in an Augustinian Missal from 1463 illustrated by Franco dei Russi (NYPL Spencer 61).<sup>140</sup> It seems appropriate to talk about “refined fantasy of such images, which are unrelated to the sacred content of the text,”<sup>141</sup> but there is also the danger of ignoring deeper connections and meanings, all the product of artistic and religious imagination and fantasy. After all, every page of this manuscript was carefully examined and corrected, if necessary, so the inclusion of such seemingly meaningless and comical images must have met with approval, and this in accordance with the allegorical reading of the pre-modern world, as best illustrated by the famous and highly influential *Physiologus* (2nd century C.E.) which had set the tone and model for the religiously appropriate interpretation of this world.<sup>142</sup>

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**137** Alexander et al., *The Splendor of the Word* (see note 136), 263.

**138** Albrecht Classen, “Das Paradox der widersprüchlichen Urteilsprechung und Weltwahrnehmung: göttliches vs. menschliches Recht in Heinrich Kaufringers ‘Die unschuldige Mörderin’ – mit paneuropäischen Ausblicken und einer neuen Quellenspur (‘La femme du roi de Portugal’),” *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen* CXX.II (2019): 7–28.

**139** Alexander et al., *The Splendor of the Word* (see note 136), 267–68.

**140** Alexander et al., *The Splendor of the Word* (see note 136), 183.

**141** Alexander et al., *The Splendor of the Word* (see note 136), 182.

**142** *Physiologus*, trans. Michael J. Curley (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1979); see also Guy R. Mermier, “The Romanian Bestiary: An English Translation and Commentary on the Ancient ‘Physiologus’ Tradition,” *Mediterranean Studies* 13 (University Park, PA: Penn State University Press, 2004), 17–55.

Otherwise, a drawing of a battle scene with a unicorn taking aim at a naked man with an erect penis (fol. 186r) would not be possible and would not make sense. Art historians have strongly suggested that the manuscript was commissioned by the convent of Augustinian nuns attached to the church of Sant'Agostino in Ferrara, so we must assume that the artist did not evoke the women's erotic desires or fantasies. Instead, the image itself served a religious purpose and required a specific translation into concrete concepts, such as the overcoming of lust (man) with the help of Christ (unicorn).<sup>143</sup>

Another example would be the *Ferial Psalter* (NYPL Spencer 42), written and decorated by the Poissy nuns, while the illustrations were applied in a Paris workshop. Here the spiritual message is more obvious and hence provides an interpretive tool for many other cases. In the psalter the folio showing King David with the harp is "designed in such a way that the text panel is framed by a border with curving vine-leaf scrollwork typical of the fourteenth century."<sup>144</sup>

Intriguingly, even though the text itself is clearly separated from the margin, the large initial draws the reader from the inside to the outside, and from there the vines extend to the second border, where the scrollwork continues, now also populated by birds, flowers, and berries. We are almost explicitly urged to perceive the written word as directly associated and bonded with the external world where nature follows its own order, though still directed by God. As this leaf beautifully illustrates, the mind is first attracted to the figure of the seated King David, then to the biblical text, and from there it begins to wander to the outside. For an illustration of this phenomenon, see the Book of Hours from 1440 (Fig. 2).

The *Naples Psalter* from ca. 1480–1490 (NYPL Spencer 130) basically follows the same model, despite major differences in the primary structure, but here as well the image of "The Annunciation" is placed in the center, below which we find a caption. From there then the eye wanders to the border, which is filled with smaller miniatures showing prophets and scenes from the life of the Virgin Mary.<sup>145</sup> As is so often the case in medieval art, scrolls above the heads of the groups of people or individuals continue with the narrative, now in written form. All this is not simple fantasy, but a masterful development of an associative chain of thoughts taking us from religious imagination to visual representation. In other words, there is no chaos, but always cosmos, divinely arranged, and by means of human imagination and artistic strategies the

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<sup>143</sup> Alexander et al., *The Splendor of the Word* (see note 136), 184. See also my brief study "The Book of Hours in the Middle Ages," *Futhark: Revista de Investigación y Cultura* 2 (2007): 111–29.

<sup>144</sup> Alexander et al., *The Splendor of the Word* (see note 136), 216.

<sup>145</sup> Alexander et al., *The Splendor of the Word* (see note 136), 221.



**Fig. 2:** Book of Hours, ca. 1440; workshop of the Master of the Privileges of Ghent and Flanders – Book of Hours, ca. 1440; Collection of the Art Institute of Chicago (public domain)

spectator is invited to gain deeper understanding of the biblical message, as unfathomable it seems to be at first sight.

In terms of imagination, then, we can safely claim that both literature and the arts, often in the service of religion, reflect deeply the human mind with its fantasies and ideas. At the same time, all ancient religions and mythologies are predicated on fantasy, as we may say in a somewhat flippant fashion, and they certainly continue to hold considerable sway over us moderns as well in a somewhat transformed manner, whether we think of fairy tales, literature, movies, and the various Scriptures. This is not to say that the biblical text (Old and New Testament), or the Qur'an would have to be regarded as simple fiction not worth our attention; by far not. However, they mirror the human mind-set and matter as such in a fundamental manner. After all, even fiction cannot be easily defined and represents more a form of projection and imagination than simple fantasy. The latter, in turn, often proves to be the source of inspiration for the creative, artistic mind, and all three elements appear as cooperative forces providing catalytic motivation relevant for the human existence.<sup>146</sup>

## Imagination in Eighteenth-Century Encyclopedic Discourse

### A Brief View Backwards

Encyclopedias can always help us to gain a better idea about commonly-held views, an understanding of the critical mass in a long-term discourse, and about traditions and cultures at a specific point in time.<sup>147</sup> On the one hand, an encyclopedia tries to present the latest ideas and knowledge, but the genre automatically requires a reflection on past notions and traditions, digesting much of past ideas, such as pertaining to imagination and fantasy. The famous *Encyclopédie ou Dictionnaire Raisonné des Sciences des Arts et des Métiers*, published by Denis Diderot und Jean Baptiste le Rond d'Alembert between 1751 and 1780, already a

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<sup>146</sup> See now the contributions to *Die Welt und Gott – Gott und die Welt? Zum Verhältnis von Religiosität und Profanität im "christlichen Mittelalter"*, ed. Elisabeth Vavra. Interdisziplinäre Beiträge zum Mittelalter und Früher Neuzeit, 9 (Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag Winter, 2019), who question the traditional claim that the influence of the Christian Church was ubiquitous throughout the pre-modern world and observe early forms of secularism.

<sup>147</sup> Robert Darnton, *The Business of Enlightenment: A Publishing History of the Encyclopédie 1775–1800* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1979).

major document of the early modern Enlightenment, also includes a succinct but comprehensive article dedicated to ‘imagination,’ which is here defined as follows:

c’est le pouvoir que chaque être sensible éprouve en soi de se représenter dans son esprit les choses sensibles; cette faculté dépend de la mémoire. On voit des hommes, des animaux, des jardins; ces perceptions entrent par les sens, la mémoire les retient, l’*imagination* les compose; voilà pourquoi les anciens Grecs appellerent les Muses *filles de Mémoire*.

[this is the power which each sensible person finds in himself that makes it possible to represent in his spirit those things that are sensible. That faculty depends on the memory. We see people, animals, gardens; those perceptions enter into us through the senses; memory retains them, imagination composes them. That’s the reason why the ancient Greeks called the muses *daughter of memory*.]

But there is a remarkable limitation:

Il est très-essentiel de remarquer que ces facultés de recevoir des idées, de les retenir, de les composer, sont au rang des choses dont nous ne pouvons rendre aucune raison; ces ressorts invisibles de notre être sont dans la main de l’Être suprême qui nous a faits, et non dans la nôtre.

Peut-être ce don de Dieu, l’*imagination*, est-il le seul instrument avec lequel nous composons des idées, & même les plus métaphysiques.<sup>148</sup>

[It is crucial to note that those faculties that allow us to receive ideas, to retain them, and to compose them belong to the category of things that we cannot understand rationally. The invisible areas of our self are in the hand of the highest Being that had made us, and not in ours.

Maybe this gift by God, imagination, is the only instrument with which we compose ideas, even those of the highest metaphysical nature.]

In the subsequent discussion, the author differentiates further between active and passive imagination and highlights that imagination constitutes the essential component of literature. Imagination is also closely associated with emotions and enthusiasm, and it leads to the creation of art.

The relevant article in Johann Heinrich Zedler’s famous *Universal-Lexicon* is entitled “Einbildung,” identifying the phenomenon as an image which the individual forms inside, a mental copy of reality outside.<sup>149</sup> He differentiates among three types of imagination, the sensuous (*idea imaginatum*), the fantastic

<sup>148</sup> “Imagination, Imaginer,” *Encyclopédie ou Dictionnaire Raisonné des Sciences, des Arts et des Métiers*, vol. 8 (Neufchâtel: Samuel Faulche, 1765; rpt. Stuttgart – Bad Canstatt: Friedrich Frommann Verlag, 1967), 560–64. For a digital version of the English translation, see <https://quod.lib.umich.edu/d/did?amt2=40;amt3=40;page=proximity;rgn=full+text;q1=le+pouvoir+que+chaque+%C3%AAtre+sensible+%C3%A9prouve+en+soi> (last accessed on Feb. 18, 2020).

<sup>149</sup> Johann Heinrich Zedler, *Grosses vollständiges Universal Lexicon aller Wissenschaften und Künste* (Halle and Leipzig: Zedler, 1734), vol. 8, 533–38.

which thrives on its own creativity, and the prejudice, that is, the preconceived opinion. *Imaginatio* by itself proves to be the power of the soul to allow external impressions to enter the inner self; hence, it is the strength of the soul to accept the impressions as they come from the outside, which then triggers an emotional response. Without imagination, none of our thoughts would survive for long and would dissipate quickly because they would lack the creative element (534). Ultimately, God implanted the power of imagination in the human mind, creating images of this world within the soul.<sup>150</sup> Depending on the circumstances, imagination affects the inner being, bringing about sickness or health, just as the images operate on their own (536). As Zedler also remarks,

Auf Seiten der Seele geschiehet die wichtigste Würckung von der Imagination in dem Willen. Sie erregt in demselben allerhand Neigungen, derer Beschaffenheit von der Beschaffenheit der Verstellung dependiret, so daß die Verbesserung des Willens in Ansehung derer Leidenschafften vor der Verbesserung der Imagination anzufangen ist. Wie aber der Wille durch die Imagination in gewisse Bewegung kann gebracht werden; also wird auch diese durch die Neigung des erstern unterhalten (537).

[On the part of the soul, the most important effect of Imagination pertains to the will. It triggers in it all kinds of inclinations, the nature of which depends on the properties of imagination. Hence, the improvement of the will has to begin with the improvement of the imagination, if we consider its passions. Just as much as the will can be moved to some extent by the imagination, as much the latter can be conditioned by the inclinations of the will.]

Zedler then moves into extensive discussions about the ethical and moral properties of imagination and the need to contain it by means of reason. Teachers are encouraged to draw from imagination in order to convey the meaning of their lessons more vividly, but the author also warns of the danger involved because the Church Fathers, drawing from numerous allegories, caused much confusion as well (538).

We will have to keep those ruminations in mind in order to understand the long-term discourse on imagination and fantasy as it evolved throughout the centuries.

## Universals of Imagination

Undoubtedly, people have always needed free space for their imagination, either simply for entertainment or for religious reasons, and many of human inventions

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<sup>150</sup> *Die gesammelte Welt: Studien zu Zedlers "Universal-Lexicon"*, ed. Kai Lohsträter and Flemming Schock. Veröffentlichungen des Leipziger Arbeitskreises zur Geschichte des Buchwesens. Schriften und Zeugnisse zur Buchgeschichte, 19 (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2013).

were simply the product of fantasy at first.<sup>151</sup> The reasons for this universal phenomenon are diverse, whether the basic need to overcome human contingency, whether the search for religious meaning, or the desire to live in alternative worlds. Both children and adults in every culture and time period have indulged in fantasy, a truly significant component of human existence and a major tool and strategy for the learning process.

I believe that we can all easily agree on these general observations although it proves to be rather difficult for us today to grasp fully what all this might really entail when we turn to the study of the past and try to come to terms with the cultural foundations and mental-historical and anthropological conditions as reflected in texts, images, sculptures, stained windows, and other art objects. Imagination and fantasy, disregarding their individual cultural-historical specificity, constitute universals and underlie human existence in a most significant manner. In fact, we encounter here a treasure trove of archetypes reflecting on the timeless struggle between good and evil, death and life, and right and wrong, almost like in fairy tales. However, the notion of imagination, perceived through a philosophical lens during the pre-modern era, has not yet adequately received full attention by scholarship, whereas the contributions of early modern thinkers to the exploration of this aspect of the human mind have proliferated considerably over the last decades and more.<sup>152</sup>

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**151** Irmgard Scharoid, *Vom Wunderbaren zum Phantas(ma)tischen: Zur Archäologie vormoderer Phantastik-Konzeption bei Ariost und Tasso*. Humanistische Bibliothek. Reihe 1, Abhandlungen, 60 (Munich: Fink, 2012); *Cambridge Companion to Fantasy Literature*, ed. Edward James and Farah Mendlesohn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012); *The Encyclopedia of Fantasy*, ed. John Clute and John Grant (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1997); *The Greenwood Encyclopedia of Science Fiction and Fantasy: Themes, Works and Wonders: Science Fiction and Fantasy*, ed. Gary Westfahl (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2005); *Encyclopedia of Fantasy and Horror Fiction*, ed. Don D'Ammassa. Facts on File Library of World Literature: Literary Movements (New York: Facts On File, 2006).

**152** H. Mainusch, "Imagination," *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie*, ed. Joachim Ritter and Karlfried Gründer. Vol. 4 (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft; Basel: Schwabe & Co, 1976), 217–19, basically ignores the Middle Ages. The topic is entirely ignored in *Europäische Enzyklopädie zu Philosophie und Wissenschaften*, ed. Hans Jörg Sandkühler. 4 vols. (Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1990); R. A. Manser, "Imagination," *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Paul Edwards (New York: The Macmillan Company; London: Collier – Macmillan, 1967), vol. 4, 136–39, does not even situate the term in any historical context and examines it only from an epistemological perspective. Pierre Miquel, in his long article on the cult of images, discusses the various types of images used in the Catholic Church throughout the biblical time, antiquity, the Middle Ages and beyond, but he does not engage with imagination, or fantasy for that matter: "Images," *Dictionnaire de Spiritualité, Ascétique et Mystique, Doctrine et Histoire* (Paris: Beauchesne, 1971), vol. VII, 1503–19.

There is certainly universal agreement that imagination plays a central role in human language, artistic creativity, technical inventions, scientific inquiry, medical research, or mathematics and geometry, but to what extent can we examine this phenomenon, along with fantasy, for the deeper understanding of the Middle Ages and early modern age?<sup>153</sup> Reiner Wimmer offers a useful definition of imagination, emphasizing that in the Middle Ages the concept of *imaginatio* was defined in the Aristotelian vein as the specific representation or visualization of something perceived by an individual, or of sensuous impressions. Thomas Aquinas claimed, as Wimmer notes, that imagination served as the mediator between perception and reason, but he then does not examine those in further detail.<sup>154</sup>

## The Creative Power of Imagination and Fantasy

While fantasy mostly seems to serve simple entertainment at first, in reality it has always created free space for human imagination, whether in religious, philosophical, political, literary, or economic and military terms. Both in the early and in the late Middle Ages, audiences delighted in highly fanciful accounts and demanded imaginary tales for their entertainment. Not much has changed since then, so the question pursued here continues to be highly topical and relevant. This insight offers an excellent explanation for the enormous success of J. R. R. Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings* (1937–), J. K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* (1997–), and David Benioff's and D. B. Weiss's *Game of Thrones* TV movie series (2011–).<sup>155</sup>

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**153** J. O'Leary-Hawthorne, "Imagination," *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward Craig (London and New York: Routledge, 1998), vol. 4, 705–08; he emphasizes: "It is important to cognitive excellence that we cultivate imagination in all areas of inquiry. Even in science, it is clear that fruitful inquiry requires an ability to imagine what an explanation for some given phenomenon might look like, imaginatively to see familiar things as somehow representative of theoretical phenomena, and so on" (707). He does not pay any attention to imagination in the Middle Ages.

**154** Reiner Wimmer, "Imaginatio," *Enzyklopädie Philosophie und Wissenschaftstheorie*, ed. Jürgen Mittelstraß. 2nd newly rev. and extensively expanded ed. (Stuttgart and Weimar: J. B. Metzler, 2008), 549–50. He refers, however, to Murray Wright Bundy, *The Theory of Imagination in Classical and Medieval Thought*. University of Illinois Studies in Language and Literature, XII (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1927).

**155** *Die Welt von "Game of Thrones": Kulturwissenschaftliche Perspektiven auf George R. R. Martins "A Song of Ice and Fire"*, ed. Markus May. Edition Kulturwissenschaft, 121 (Bielefeld: transcript, 2016); Albrecht Classen, "Trivial Literature in Past and Present: Did the Middle Ages Know the Concept of Triviality? With a Focus on The Pleier's *Meleranz*," *Literatur am Rand: Perspektiven der*



By the same token, medieval literature and the arts were filled with highly fanciful elements, taking us from adventure to adventure, whether we think of the anonymous *Herzog Ernst* (ca. 1180/1220) or of Marie de France's *lais*. The wealth of images of monsters and other curious creatures in medieval manuscripts confirms strikingly how much fantasy and imagination were at work already then, whether embedded in or subsumed under a religious framework.

Hence, to study imagination and fantasy from this perspective, allows us to develop a significant new perspective toward the pre-modern world beyond the narrow religious, political, and religious perspectives as they have been traditionally applied or pursued and to shed a major light on another facet of the fundamentals of the Middle Ages and early modern age.<sup>156</sup> Literature, above all, thus emerges as a laboratory of human creativity and imagination, as a space where fantasy and creativity can interact freely with each other, without neglecting to challenge the individual exposed to it, questioning the own basis of all existence.<sup>157</sup> In other words, reality and imagination interact with each other profoundly, which is ultimately characteristic of human life, and this also very much in the past.

For instance, utopian literature, which can also be traced back to the Middle Ages, is deeply predicated on imagination, on the dream of an alternative world, that is, on the hope that a better society could be created and that

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*Trivialliteratur vom Mittelalter bis zum 21. Jahrhundert*, ed. Albrecht Classen and Eva Parra-Membrives. Popular Fiction Studies, 1 (Tübingen: Narr Verlag, 2013), 93–116; see also the contributions to *Zwischen Kanon und Unterhaltung: interkulturelle und intermediale Aspekte von hoher und niederer Literatur. Between Canon and Entertainment*, ed. Annie Bourguignon, Konrad Harrer, and Franz Hintereder-Emde (Berlin: Frank & Timme, Verlag für wissenschaftliche Literatur, 2016). For a medieval example, see Nicola McLelland, *Ulrich von Zatzikhoven's Lanzelet: Narrative Style and Entertainment*. Arthurian Studies, 46 (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2000).

**156** Mery Erdal Jordan, *La narrativa fantástica: evolución del género y su relación con las concepciones del lenguaje*. Ediciones de Iberoamericana. Ser. A: Literaturgeschichte und -kritik, 18 (Frankfurt a. M.: Vervuert, 1998); Uwe Durst, *Theorie der phantastischen Literatur* (Tübingen: Francke, 2001); *Fantastic Odysseys: Selected Essays from the Twenty-Second International Conference on the Fantastic in the Arts*, ed. Mary Pharr. Contributions to the Study of Science Fiction and Fantasy, 104 (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2003); *Fantasia y literatura en la edad media y los siglos de oro*, ed. Salvador Miguel Nicasio. Biblioteca aurea hispanica, 28 (Madrid: Iberoamerica, 2004); *Signatur und Phantastik in den schönen Künsten und in den Kulturwissenschaften der frühen Neuzeit*, ed. Martin Zenck (Munich: Wilhelm Fink, 2008).

**157** Andreas von Arnould/Christian Klein, *Weil Bücher unsere Welt verändern: vom Nibelungenlied bis Harry Potter* (Darmstadt: wbg Theiss, 2019); *Phantastik und Gesellschaftskritik im deutschen, niederländischen und nordischen Kulturraum*, ed. Marie-Thérèse Mourey. Beihefte zum Euphorion, 104 (Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag Winter, 2018).

human happiness could be achieved.<sup>158</sup> Similarly, the literary representation of love with all its problems and conflicts, including the experience of death of one of the two partners, or of both, is systematically predicated on the narrative strategy to direct the audience's imagination toward fantasy and dreams. The fictional discourse also provides us with a key to perceive the world of emotions hidden within the human body, so we face here both a strategy to expose the inner world of feelings and to make the listeners (and spectators) recognize and accept the imagined sensation described in the text (or the image).<sup>159</sup> The evidence of the visual arts, as it has come down to us from antiquity to the Middle Ages and then from there to us today, is strong enough to confirm how much humans are in need of expressing themselves, their mind, in imaginary and fanciful fashion. Religion, philosophy, ethics, legal and medical issues are the outgrowth of the mind, and find their manifestations also in the visual and literary products.

## Late Antique/Early Medieval Reflections by St. Augustine

As St. Augustine, Bishop of Hippo (ca. 354–430), already indicated in his famous *Confessions* (397–398), his true life did not rest in his external existence, filled

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**158** Christian Wehr, *Imaginierte Wirklichkeiten: Untersuchungen zum 'récit fantastique' von Nodier bis Maupassant*. Romanica Monacensia, 52 (Tübingen: Narr, 1997); Tomas Tomasek, *Die Utopie im "Tristan" Gotfrids von Straßburg*. Hermaea, Neue Folge, 49 (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer, 1985); Karma Lochrie, *Nowhere in the Middle Ages*. The Middle Ages Series (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016); for a detailed overview of what utopias meant in the Middle Ages, see Heiko Hartmann, "Utopias/Utopian Thought," *Handbook of Medieval Studies: Terms – Methods – Trends*, ed. Albrecht Classen. Vol. 2 (Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2010), 1400–08.

**159** Katja Altpeter-Jones, "Gewaltige Bilder: *Imaginatio* und Gewalt in der mittelalterlichen Versnovelle," *Imagination und Deixis: Studien zur Wahrnehmung im Mittelalter*, ed. Kathryn Starkey and Horst Wenzel (Stuttgart: S. Hirzel, 2007), 51–63. She emphasizes that the issue of courtly love was of central importance to courtly society, both on the level of practical experiences and on the level of imagination: "Dem geöffneten Körper der Liebenden in den Versnovellen tritt somit der geöffnete Körper des Rezipienten zur Seite. Im Idealfall werden die Gefühle des Liebenden im Text und die Gefühle des Rezipienten eins" (63; The opened body of the lovers as presented in the verse narratives is placed next to the opened body of the recipient. In the ideal case the feelings of the lover in the text and the feelings of the recipients become one). See also Tobias Bulang, "Zur Exponierung von Imagination in Ulrichs von Liechtenstein *Frauendienst*," *ibid.*, 65–84, who argues that Ulrich projects the heart as the central location of interiority, hence as the site of poetic imagination.

with desires, need for pleasures, sensations, and sinfulness, as was the case in his youth, but in his spiritual dimension, where he could imagine himself as being part of God's creation.<sup>160</sup> As he observes himself, "My soul is like a house, small for you to enter, but I pray you to enlarge it. It is in ruins, but I ask you to remake it. It contains much that you will not be pleased to see; this I know and do not hide."<sup>161</sup> True to form, Augustine reflects deeply and in a chronological fashion about his life of sinfulness and lays bare his inner thoughts and feelings, granting us insight into his dimension of faith, hidden in his soul. This is not mere fantasy, but most powerful imagination grounded in deep belief in God.<sup>162</sup>

The everyday life is determined by the material conditions, and Augustine regarded those as illusions because they blinded him to God: "The food we dream of is very like the food we eat when we are awake, but it does not nourish because it is only a dream" (Book III, 5, p. 61). His argument mattered so deeply because he had to position himself clearly in contrast to those whom we might call today radical materialists, including such influential figures as Tertullian. In his *De civitate dei*, for instance, he commented that the "mind of the human being and of the rational soul is a nature that is certainly not a body, when not even that similitude of a body, which is seen and judged of in the mind of the thinker, is itself a body" (8.5).<sup>163</sup> As Niederbacher summarizes, for Augustine it was evident that humans contain a certain capability to imagine things because that force is immaterial, or spiritual ("spiritalem naturam," *De Genesis ad litteram imperfectus liber*, 12.23.49).<sup>164</sup>

Interestingly, Augustine perceives various levels of imagination, one of this world, deceptive, and one of another world, where God rests: "The images we form in our mind's eye, when we picture things that really do exist, are far better founded than these inventions; and the things themselves are still more certain than the images we form of them. But you [God] are not these things" (Book III, 5, p. 61). The Ciceronian echo is clearly noticeable (see above), and

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**160** Miles Hollingworth, *Saint Augustine of Hippo: An Intellectual Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013); Klaus Rosen, *Augustinus: Genie und Heiliger; eine historische Biographie. Gestalten der Antike* (Darmstadt: Zabern, 2015). The number of biographical and theological studies on Augustine is legion.

**161** Saint Augustine, *Confessions*, trans. with an intro. by R. S. Pine-Coffin (1961; Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin, 1970), Book I, 5, p. 24.

**162** See Bruno Niederbacher, S.J., "The Human Soul: Augustine's Case for Soul-Body Dualism," *The Cambridge Companion to Augustine*, ed. David Vincent Meconi, S.J., and Eleonore Stump. Sec. ed. (2001; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 125–41.

**163** St. Augustine, *De civitate Dei*, ed. Bernardus Dombart and Alphonsus Kalb. *Corpus Christianorum: Series Latina*, 47–48 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1955).

**164** Niederbacher, "The Human Soul" (see note 162), 131–33.

many other thinkers and authors were to follow him in this concept of imagination, especially Anselm of Canterbury who identified God's creation with the work of a craftsman, while people can produce imaginary things only out of composite parts in reality.<sup>165</sup>

Theologically speaking, Augustine realizes that "[t]here is another reality besides this, though I knew nothing of it" (*Confessions*, Book III, 7, p. 62). As much as he means hereby the divine realm, as much does he also acknowledge the fact, as he perceived it, that spirituality, imagination, and faith were of supreme importance and operated on their own, directing the physical body. Consequently, he identified his entire life prior to his conversion as an existence filled with delusion (Book IV, 1, p. 71), or simply fantasy. At the same time, Augustine admits that during his early years he could only imagine God but did not know Him properly.

For Augustine, all his problems during his youth rested in the fact that his mind was confused, here a negative evaluation of imagination as a danger to the religious enlightenment simply waiting for him (Book IV, 3, p. 73). However, at least he acknowledged the significant influence of his mind on his entire life, implying that his approach to God was the result of the direction which his imagination was taking. In the context of his early youth, he is even talking about the "superstitious, soul-destroying fallacies which brought my mother to tears over me" (Book IV, 4, p. 75), thereby drawing a dividing line between the right and the wrong images, without telling us how he would have realized the distinction. Fundamentally, however, Augustine realizes that his soul "must listen to the words of God" (Book IV, 11, p. 81), thus he accepts the fact that there is a difference between body and mind, and that the latter constitutes the essential engine of his entire existence. He wants the soul to take the lead over the body (*ibid.*).

Ultimately, in conformity with his religious impetus, Augustine urges his own soul, and hence that of his listeners/readers, to follow its own lead: "If the things of this world delight you, praise God for them but turn your love away from them and give it to their Maker, so that in the things that please you you may not displease him" (IV, 12, p. 82).

Thus, Augustine does not fully develop a theory of imagination, since he addresses primarily the world of the soul and directs it toward God (IV, 12, p. 83),

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<sup>165</sup> Anselm of Canterbury, *Monologion*, in S. Anselmi Cantuariensis archiepiscopi, *Opera Omnia*, ed. Franciscus Salesius Schmitt. Reprint (Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt: Frommann-Holzboog, 1938–1961), vol. 1, 1–87; here XI, 26. Quoted from Karen Sullivan, *The Danger of Romance: Truth, Fantasy, and Arthurian Fiction* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2018), 247. However, she does not provide the full bibliographical information.

but his ruminations reveal already a deep sense of the true working of the soul and its impact on the body. Whereas in the early part of his *Confessions* he warned himself and his audience about the dangers of a mind caught in an illusion, deceived by images and fantasy, eventually the focus turns to the workings of the soul, the foundation of the entire theological discourse.

In Niederbacher's words, again, "he drew the conclusion that there is an immaterial, simple substance: the human mind as bearer of the mental events and acts we are all familiar with."<sup>166</sup> Many of his successors, throughout the Middle Ages and beyond, followed this direction of Augustine's religious orientation.<sup>167</sup> After all, as Robert Pasnau summarizes,

Human beings are special among the animals, for medieval thinkers, because we have a mind, a cognitive power that is not part of the brain or in any way physical ... Whereas the physical senses were limited to the apprehension of particular images and objects, the intellect was regarded as unlimited in its representational scope, able to grasp not just a particular quality, but the very nature of the quality, a nature that was the same in all individuals possessing the quality. Hence the mark of the mental was not intentionality but conceptualization, and the divide between the physical and the nonphysical was located not at the boundary of consciousness but at the boundary of abstract thought.<sup>168</sup>

## Thomas Aquinas

But Augustine was not the all-determining voice throughout the Middle Ages, as the observations by Thomas Aquinas (1225–1274) indicate for whom human fantasy was much more autonomous and could lead to many creative acts, some of which with a positive impact, others with a negative one: "Passio

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**166** Niederbacher, "The Human Soul" (see note 162), 138–39. See also Robert J., O'Connell, *Imagination and Metaphysics in St. Augustine*. The Aquinas Lecture, 50 (Milwaukee, WI: Marquette University Press, 1986); Brian Stock, *The Integrated Self: Augustine, the Bible, and Ancient Thought*. Haney Foundation Series (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2017). See also the contributions to *Intellect et imagination dans la philosophie médiévale*, ed. Maria Cândida da Costa Reis Monteiro Pacheco. Rencontres de philosophie médiévale, 11.2 (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2006).

**167** See, for instance, *Passiones animae: die "Leidenschaften der Seele" in der mittelalterlichen Theologie und Philosophie: ein Handbuch*, ed. Christian Schäfer and Martin Thurner. 2nd ed. Veröffentlichungen des Grabmann-Institutes zur Erforschung der mittelalterlichen Theologie und Philosophie, 53 (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2013).

**168** Robert Pasnau, "Human Nature," *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval Philosophy*, ed. A. S. McGraide. Cambridge Companions (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 208–30; here 215.

phantasiae est in nobis cum volumus, in potestate nostra est formare aliquid, quasi apparens ante oculos nostros, ut montes aureo, vel quicquid volumus” (The passion of fantasy rests in us as we wish; it is in our power to form anything whatever appears in front of our eyes, such as golden mountains, or whatever we wish).<sup>169</sup> The theological and philosophical discussion about the true meaning of imagination, its validity, danger, or potentials continued throughout the centuries, while medieval and early modern poets and artists happily relied on their own fantasy when they created their works, mostly in disregard of the authoritative comments by Augustine or Thomas Aquinas.<sup>170</sup>

## Literature: The Fictional Realm of Imagination

If we accept the general premise of imagination being a fundamental force throughout time, whether critiqued and rejected or not, then it becomes suddenly entirely clear why the Humanities are of central importance for all academic enterprises. Examining literary texts, for instance, makes possible the close analysis of the mental, intellectual, and emotional make-up of people past and present. Analyzing the Old English *Beowulf*, the Middle High German *Nibelungenlied*, the Old Spanish *El Poema de Mío Cid*, the Anglo-Norman *lais* by Marie de France, Wolfram von Eschenbach’s Middle High German *Willehalm*, Dante’s Medieval Italian *Vita Nuovo*, Boccaccio’s *Decameron*, or the vast field of medieval courtly love poetry and of late medieval *fabliaux* or *novelle* thus emerges as an activity not simply focused on the requirement to deal with the literary canon for professional reasons. This often proves to be difficult to handle for younger generations, unless we grasp it as an effort to come to terms with a vast spectrum of life conditions, here projected in the literary framework determined by imagination and fantasy.<sup>171</sup>

**169** Thomas Aquinas, *Sentencia libri De anima*, in *Opera omnia*, ed. Roberto Buso. 7 vols. (Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt: Frommann-Holzboog, 1980), lib. 3 l. 4 n. 1. Online at: <http://www.corpusthomicum.org/can3.html> (last accessed on Feb. 18, 2020).

**170** Sullivan, *The Danger of Romance* (see note 165), 247–51. She moves, however, too quickly from the Middle Ages to the twentieth century and then allows imaginary authors such as Tolkien and Rowling to take the lead, more than seems appropriate for her research focus.

**171** See, for instance, Stephen Dobranski, *Milton’s Visual Imagination: Imagery in Paradise Lost* (New York: New York Cambridge University Press, 2015); William Franke, *The Revelation of Imagination: From Homer and the Bible through Virgil and Augustine to Dante* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2015); Stuart Sillars, *Shakespeare and the Visual Imagination* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015); Rainer Stillers, “Das Unvorstellbare und die

Instead, all those texts and countless other documents, including the contemporary art works, music, and architecture, invite us to investigate the world of imagination and fantasy, which in turn sheds major light on the meaning of all human life because it proves to be considerably more than just a fanciful creation of no relevance. We could slightly adapt the old slogan and apply it here as well: tell me what you imagine, and I tell you who you are.<sup>172</sup> Fantasy, hence, in its infinite manifestations, could serve as a valuable key unlocking for us the human mind-set both in the past and in the present.

This approach allows many different avenues; we can examine both mystical (Mechthild of Magdeburg) and spiritualist (Jacob Böhme) phenomena, we can take into consideration fanciful elements in courtly romances (Marie de France's *lais*; Heinrich von dem Türlin, *Diu Crône*; the anonymous *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*), and can include satirical comments about utopia or the Land of Cockaigne in literary texts (*Aucassin et Nicolette*) and in paintings

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Vorstellung: Zur Imagination in Dantes *Purgatorio* (Canti IX–XVII),” *Deutsches Dante-Jahrbuch* 91 (2016): 62–78.

172 I have probed this issue already in a variety of shorter articles, focusing, above all, on the relevance of medieval literature today: “Mental and Physical Health, Spirituality and Religion in the Middle Ages and Early Modern Age: Medieval Answers for Our Future? With Special Emphasis on Spiritual Healing Through Narratives of Mourning: Johannes of Tepl and Christine de Pizan,” *Mental Health, Spirituality, and Religion in the Middle Ages and Early Modern Age*, ed. Albrecht Classen. *Fundamentals of Medieval and Early Modern Culture*, 15 (Berlin and Boston: Walter de Gruyter, 2014), 1–154; “Medieval Studies within German Studies: *The Nibelungenlied* and Hartmann von Aue’s *Der arme Heinrich*,” *Taking Stock of German Studies in the United States: The New Millennium*, ed. Rachel Halverston and Carol Anne Costabile Heming. *Studies in German Literature, Linguistics, and Culture* (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2015), 52–67; “Alte Texte – zeitlose Botschaften: Das Mittelalter in DaF und Literaturunterricht: Das Fremde in der eigenen Kultur – die eigene Kultur im fremden Text,” *Amsterdamer Beiträge zur älteren Germanistik* 76 (2017): 508–29; “The Challenges of the Humanities, Past, Present, and Future: Why the Middle Ages Mean So Much For Us Today and Tomorrow,” *Thalloris* 2 (2017): 191–217; “The Heuristic Value of German Literature: The Eternal Plea for the Relevance of Medieval and Early Modern Literature from a Practical/Pedagogical Perspective,” *Literature & Aesthetics* (Open Access) 28.1 (2018); online at: <https://openjournals.library.sydney.edu.au/index.php/LA/article/view/12602/11573>; “The Human Quest for Happiness and Meaning: Old and New Perspectives: Religious, Philosophical, and Literary Reflections from the Past as a Platform for Our Future: St. Augustine, Boethius, and Gautier de Coincy,” *Athens Journal of Humanities & Arts* 5.2 (2018): 179–206 (<http://www.athensjournals.gr/humanities/2018-5-2-3-Classen.pdf>); and “The Past as the Key for the Future: Reflections on an Ancient Question. What Does (Medieval) Literature Mean Today in the Twenty-First Century?,” to appear in *Athens Journal of Philology*.

(Pieter Brueghel the Elder, “Het Luilekkerland” [1567]).<sup>173</sup> Fantasy – not in its trivial, playful, and hence almost meaningless function, such as in children’s play – was never that far away, and this also in the world of the Middle Ages and beyond. Every description of feasts and banquets within literary texts and paintings reveals mental concepts, specific mirrors of medieval imagination, fantasy (Wolfram von Eschenbach’s *Parzival*, ca. 1205), but also dreams, if not horror scenarios in the case of a fiasco resulting from a failed feast (Heinrich Wittenwiler, *Der Ring*, ca. 1400).<sup>174</sup> Despite all attempts by the Catholic Church to impose its authority and hence its strict religious teachings upon the laity, individual imagination, creativity, and playfulness continued to appear everywhere which threatened to undermine that strategy; we only need to examine the objects of our study more carefully to discover the fantasy hidden behind or next to the official images, documents, and sculptures.

## Music and Imagination

The world of music would probably also have to be included here because songs or performances promote, suggest, trigger, and create fantasy and imagination. Sven Hroar Klempe, for instance,

defines musical imagination in terms of a human act that provides a type of framework for cognition in which cognition and sensations are united in feelings. This also forms the basis for verticality, which is expressed in terms of musical polyphony. The multitude in

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<sup>173</sup> Dieter Richter, *Schlaraffenland: Geschichte einer populären Phantasie* (Cologne: Diederichs, 1984); Frank Ross, “An Interpretation of ‘Land of Cockaigne’ (1567) by Pieter Breugel the Elder,” *The Sixteenth-Century Journal* 22.2 (1991): 299–329; Herman Pleij, *Dreaming of Cockaigne: Medieval Fantasies of the Perfect Life*, trans. Diane Webb (1997; New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 2001). For some other examples of this hilarious form of utopia in music, ceremonies, and even film, see online at <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cockaigne> (last accessed on Feb. 18, 2020).

<sup>174</sup> See the contributions to *Feste und Feiern im Mittelalter*. Paderborner Symposion des Mediävistenverbandes, 3, ed. Detlef Altenburg (Sigmaringen: Thorbecke, 1991); Bridget Ann Henisch, *Fast and Feast: Food in Medieval Society* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1976); Caroline Walker Bynum, *Holy Feast and Holy Fast: The Religious Significance of Food to Medieval Women*. The New Historicism: Studies in Cultural Poetics, 1 (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1988); Christian Rohr, *Festkultur des Mittelalters*. Lebensbilder des Mittelalters (Graz: Akademische Druck- und Verlags-Anstalt, 2002). See also, for later centuries, the contributions to *Fête et imagination dans la littérature du XVIe au XVIIIe siècle: actes du colloque international du Centre de Recherches Aixois sur l’Imagination de la Renaissance à l’Âge Classique*, ed. Huguette Krief. Collection Textuelles: Littérature (Aix-en-Provence: Publications de l’Université de Provence, 2004).



musical polyphony opens up for a sort of community, which brings in a social dimension. As long as the social community forms the basis of cultural psychology, a thorough understanding of musical imagination may contribute to a more complete understanding of cultural psychology as well.<sup>175</sup>

In this volume, however, music will not be fully represented because of a lack of expertise on my part and because no significant contributor could be attracted to address our topic in this genre. However, there is no question regarding the importance of music for the study of the imaginary world, whether we think of the musical genre developed since the sixteenth century known as *fantasia* (Francesco Canova da Milano and Luis de Milán), later also employed by William Byrd, John Jenkins, and Henry Purcell (seventeenth century), Johann Sebastian Bach and Georg Wilhelm Telemann (both eighteenth century), or of Hector Berlioz's *Symphonie Fantastique* (1830), not to mention countless other pieces that directly pursue the issue of fantasy and invite the audience to accompany the orchestra or band on an imaginative path into another world.<sup>176</sup>

But did not all musicians or composers do that throughout time? What else would the Gregorian chant intend but to uplift the listener and take him/her to a new dimension of spirituality? The musical liturgy developed by Hildegard of Bingen served specifically the purpose to help her nuns and other clerics to gain the necessary inner harmony and inspiration to lift their minds up to God and heaven.<sup>177</sup> The ineffable or apophatic of God's appearance in the human dimension was always nearly impossible to express, but mystical visions and

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**175** Sven Hroar Klempe, "Music and Imagination," *Handbook of Imagination and Culture*, ed. Tania Zittoun and Vlad Glaveanu (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), ch. 12; here I quote the summary of his findings, online at DOI:10.1093/oso/9780190468712.003.0012, or at: <https://www.oxfordscholarship.com/view/10.1093/oso/9780190468712.001.0001/oso-9780190468712-chapter-12> (last accessed on Feb. 18, 2020). See also Saam Trivedi, *Imagination, Music, and the Emotions: A Philosophical Study* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2017); Nicholas Cook, *Music as Creative Practice. Studies in Musical Performance as Creative Practice*, 5 (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018). See also the contributions to *Die Musik – eine Kunst des Imaginären?*, ed. Ulrich Tadday. Musik-Konzepte. Sonderband, Neue Folge (Munich: edition text + kritik, 2016).

**176** For a brief overview and a useful bibliography, see online at: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fantasia\\_\(music\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fantasia_(music)) (last accessed on Feb. 18, 2020). Cf. also *Compendium Improvisation: fantasieren nach historischen Quellen des 17. und 18. Jahrhunderts*, ed. Markus Schwenkreis. Schola Cantorum Basiliensis: Scripta, 5 (Basel: Schwabe Verlag, 2018).

**177** Joscelyn Godwin, *Harmonies of Heaven and Earth: The Spiritual Dimension of Music from Antiquity to the Avant-Garde* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1987); Barbara Stühlmeyer, "Musik im 12. Jahrhundert," *Hildegard von Bingen, 1098–1179*, ed. Hans-Jürgen Kotzur (Mainz: Verlag Philipp von Zabern, 1998), 178–81; Michael C. Gardiner, *Hildegard von Bingen's Ordo virtutum: A Musical and Metaphysical Analysis* (London and New York: Routledge, 2019).

then also hymns and other musical compositions lent themselves exceedingly well to allow for epistemological bridges to establish.<sup>178</sup> Is not mysticism itself a kind of cosmic music where a new form of harmony develops? In the twentieth century, Thomas Merton famously formulated, “In order to find God in ourselves, we must stop looking at ourselves, stop checking and verifying ourselves in the mirror of our own futility, and be content to *be* in Him and to do whatever He wills, according to our limitations, judging our acts not in the light of our own illusions, but in the light of His reality which is all around us in the things and people we live with.”<sup>179</sup>

Did not courtly musicians and their predecessors in the early Middle Ages entertain their audiences with sweet and delightful songs and musical performances, thereby alleviating people’s mind and removing their daily worries because they find themselves, already after several accords, in another world determined by imagination and fantasy? Fritz Peter Knapp now emphasizes quite rightly that the “theatralische Ausdruck ... wie der lyrische und epische [gehörte] zu den Urbedürfnissen des Menschen” (the theatrical expression, just as the lyrical and epic expression, belongs to the archaic [or ur-]needs of people).<sup>180</sup> In the Middle Ages, this phenomenon was always associated with music, which served as the critical bridge between the individual imagination and the public formulation. We can observe this quite intensively in the case of the epic poem *Beowulf* before and after the battle against Grendel and his mother; in Gottfried von Straßburg’s Middle High German *Tristan* where music constantly plays a critical role<sup>181</sup>; in the Old French “Lay of Lecheor,” in the Old French *chante-fable*, *Aucassin et Nicolette*; in the various Icelandic sagas, such as *Egil’s Saga*, or in the Old Spanish *Cantigas de Santa Maria*, not to mention the Catholic mass altogether which always includes some music as an essential element of the religious performance to promote the development of imagination.<sup>182</sup>

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**178** See now the contributions to *Mystique, langage, musique: dire l’indicible au Moyen Âge*, ed. René Wetzell and Laurence Wuidar, together with Katharina Wimmer. Scriptorium Friburgense, 43 (Wiesbaden: Dr. Ludwig Reichert Verlag, 2019).

**179** Merton, *No Man is an Island* (see note 7), 120.

**180** Fritz Peter Knapp, *Blüte der europäischen Literatur des Hochmittelalters*. Part 3: *Lyrik – Schauspiel – altnordische Gattungen* (Stuttgart: S. Hirzel Verlag, 2019), 177. He refers specifically to the genre of the religious, subsequently also secular play. His focus does not rest on imagination; the quote only serves him as a general introduction, but it drives home the essential point regarding music and imagination.

**181** Hannes Kästner, *Harfe und Schwert: der höfische Spielmann bei Gottfried von Straßburg*. Untersuchungen zur deutschen Literaturgeschichte, 30 (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer, 1981).

**182** Nigel E. Wilkins, *Words and Music in Medieval Europe*. Variorum Collected Studies Series, 976 (Farnham, Surrey, and Burlington, VT: Ashgate Variorum, 2011).

Although music is a form of esoteric language, it pursues very concrete ends, transforming our material existence into an aesthetic experience where imagination and fantasy can have free reign.<sup>183</sup> Every medieval performer, bards or skalds, courtly musician, goliard or minstrel was fully aware of this and served, so to speak, as the people's mouthpiece, allowing their own mental images to come out as poetic and musical projections.

Philosophers and theologians have examined throughout time the meaning of imagination and its relationship with the physical side of human life. Since the time of Plato, if not earlier, the operations in our minds have been recognized as critically important, although it remains rather unclear, despite many efforts by neuroscientists, for all our actions, movements, decisions, and reactions. Why do we believe what we do believe? Why does our rationality not dominate everything in our world, and why do emotions often take over and control our behavior? Without going too much into details, we must question as deeply as possible what forces influence us as human beings, and whether those forces were different in the past compared to today. The most recent discourse on music encourages us to perceive in music much more than just an abstract, autonomous phenomenon (Adorno), but rather one in which to perceive ideas and sounds, gestures and performance, statements and rhythm, the actual enactment of the tone and the words behind or next to them. According to Andreas Kräusel,

Wird in der Moderne aus der *ut pictura poesis* die *ut musica poesis* (Eckel 2015), dann entsteht ein Bild- und Visualisierungsbedarf, der nicht mehr von den bildenden Künsten oder der Mimesis-Lehre gedeckt wird. Für diesen Visualisierungsbedarf ist das intermediale Verhältnis von Klang und Prosa eine prominente und hilfreiche Relation, da der literarische Text in all seinen Facetten eine grafische, schriftliche und insofern auch visuelle und optische Funktion erhält und Ergänzung erfüllt. Auch die gestische Verkörperung des Klangs stellt ja eine solche Visualisierungsleistung dar, auch dann, wenn es sich um imaginäre oder imaginative, aber eben bildproduzierende Verfahren, Formen und Bilder als images und nicht pictures handelt. Hatte der Notentext die Sichtbarkeit der Musik gewährleistet, so erfüllt diesen medialen Modus der Visualisierung der literarische oder diskursive Text dann, wenn Musik als Klang definiert wird und erscheint oder real wird. Wird die moderne Musikkultur vom Klang oder Sound beherrscht, dann steigert dies den Bedarf an erläuternden Textsorten, die die Unsichtbarkeit des Klangs kompensieren oder mimisch imitieren.

[When the principle of *ut pictura poesis* becomes the principle of *ut musica poesis* in modernity [Eckel 2015], then the need for images and visualization is no longer met by the visual

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**183** See also Volker Mertens, "Der Hof, die Liebe, die Dame und ihr Sänger: Überlegungen zur Thematik und Pragmatik des Minnesangs am Beispiel von Liedern Walthers von der Vogelweide," *Walther von der Vogelweide: actes du colloque du Centre d'Etudes Médiévales de l'Université de Picardie Jules Verne, 15 et 16 Janvier 1995*. Wodan, 52 (Greifswald: Reineke Verlag, 1995), 75–93.

arts or the teachings of mimesis. Regarding the need for visualization, the intermedial relationship of sound and prose assumes a prominent and useful role because thereby the literary text gains, in all of its facets, a graphic, written, and thus also visual and optical function and enrichment. The gestural embodiment of sound also represents such a strategy to create a visualization, even then when the procedures are imaginary or imaginative, and hence are involved in creating *images*, not *pictures*. While the scores had guaranteed the visualization of music, the literary text achieves this medial modus of visualization when music is defined as sound and then is translated into something visual and real. When the modern musical culture is determined by the sound or tone, then this intensifies the need for explanatory texts that compensate the invisibility of the sound or imitate it mimetically].

We only need to apply these thoughts to the pre-modern world to discover how much they are truly meaningful and support our examination of the world of imagination and fantasy. In terms of imagination, then, postmodern music might begin to rediscover its roots in the Middle Ages. This could then mean that post-modern musical theory can take us back to the Middle Ages and reopen the doors to a world where the human imagination finds its most vivid, though also abstract expression – in music.<sup>184</sup> Then, mystical visions and musical revelations could be recognized as tandem partners, both carried by the power of the human mind. Little wonder that Gottfried von Straßburg emphasized so much the role of music as a transformative power in his *Tristan*, whether it is the music played by the protagonist that enchants everyone at court, or whether it is the magical music created by the bell hanging off the neck of the mysterious dog from Avalon, Petitcreiu, that pleases the listener so much that s/he forgets all worries or concerns and thus loses even the feelings of love (see below). To be sure, music carries the listener beyond his/her real existence into another dimension, which is powerfully illustrated by all medieval church music, for instance.

## Hartmann von Aue: The Voyeur and the Mind

### Gazing into the Dark Resulting in an Epiphany

A Humanities-based approach to these fundamental questions thus suddenly finds itself in close proximity with the research carried out by medical and

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**184** See now the intriguing discussion of the current research on the recently rediscovered relationship between music and literature by Andreas Käuser, “Musik und Literatur: Skizze einer Forschungslandschaft,” *literaturkritik.de* 8 (August 2019), online at: [https://literaturkritik.de/public/rezension.php?rez\\_id=25817](https://literaturkritik.de/public/rezension.php?rez_id=25817) (last accessed on Feb. 18, 2020). Käuser refers to the study by Winfried Eckel, *Ut musica poesis: Die Literatur der Moderne aus dem Geist der Musik. Ein Beitrag zur Poetik der Figuration* (Paderborn: Wilhelm Fink, 2015).

psychological scientists. Physical and spiritual health intimately interact with each other, as many medieval poets and scientists have already taught us.<sup>185</sup> Hartmann von Aue's verse novella "Der arme Heinrich" ("Lord Henry," ca. 1190/1200) illustrates this most dramatically because there the leper Heinrich, at first willing to accept the sacrifice by a young peasant's daughter to die for him and thus to heal him, suddenly has a radical change of heart, an epiphany, when he peeps through a crack in the door and discovers, placed on the operation table, naked, and being prepared for the cutting-out of her heart leading to her immediate death and allegedly to his own recovery, the most beautiful creature on earth. He immediately decides to reject the sacrifice and to accept his own mortality, his leprosy. The inner self, as we could read this narrative, thus proves to be the real 'sick' component, and only once Heinrich has accepted his physical condition as given to him by God, meaning, his death, does God ("speculator cordis") recognize his changed heart and restore his physical health again. Only once body and mind have become joined again, can there be hope for a holistically healthy individual.<sup>186</sup> It remains a matter of debate what Heinrich had really espied when he looked inside, but he can no longer accept the death of this innocent and most beautiful young woman, who might well be his own soul about to die so that his body on the outside can live.

Hartmann here presents us with a weighty example in which he illustrates intriguingly the true power of the mind, hence of imagination. Heinrich fancied he would regain his life through the girl's sacrifice, but he only recognizes when he gazes into the darkness (of his own life) that he was about to take a life to which he was not entitled. In other words, the poet projects here a most meaningful scenery in which the protagonist is allowed to confront his own imagination, to draw consequences from that insight, and who thus can transform his existence. When he sees the young woman alive, his mind then creates a picture of her death, which he cannot accept.

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**185** *Mental Health, Spirituality, and Religion in the Middle Ages and Early Modern Age*, ed. Albrecht Classen. Fundamentals of Medieval and Early Modern Culture, 15 (Berlin and Boston: Walter de Gruyter, 2014).

**186** Albrecht Classen, "Herz und Seele in Hartmanns von Aue 'Der arme Heinrich.'" *Der mittelalterliche Dichter als Psychologe?*, *Mediaevistik* 14 (2003): 7–30; id., "Utopian Space in the Countryside: Love and Marriage Between a Knight and a Peasant Girl in Medieval German Literature. Hartmann von Aue's *Der arme Heinrich*, Anonymous, 'Dis ist von dem Heselin,' Walther von der Vogelweide, Oswald von Wolkenstein, and Late-Medieval Popular Poetry," *Rural Space in the Middle Ages and Early Modern Age: The Spatial Turn in Premodern Studies*, ed. Albrecht Classen, with the collaboration of Christopher R. Clason. Fundamentals of Medieval and Early Modern Culture, 9 (Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2012), 251–79.

Terms such as ‘God,’ the ‘Spirit,’ or ‘Faith,’ along with ‘Love,’ ‘Hope,’ or ‘Dreams’ seem to be highly elusive, and yet they exert a deep influence on all of us, both in the past and in the present, or they simply constitute part of the human experience and identity. There have been many attempts to approach those intangible aspects in cultural-historical terms because they are deeply embedded in the history of mentality<sup>187</sup> and the history of emotions.<sup>188</sup> After all, many forms of ordinary and extraordinary behavior and actions are obviously driven by emotional and imaginary forces, even if this all proves to be rather complicated and difficult to fathom from a scholarly perspective, unless we fall back to psychological analysis, which might not work so well within a cultural-historical context and is fraught by numerous speculations, inexactitudes, and imponderabilia.<sup>189</sup>

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**187** A. Burguiere, “The Fate of the History of Mentalities in the Annales,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 24.3 (1982): 424–37; cf. also the contributions to *Mentalitäten im Mittelalter: Methodische und inhaltliche Probleme*, ed. František Graus. Vorträge und Forschungen, XXXV (Sigmaringen: Jan Thorbecke, 1987); Philippe Poirrier, *Les enjeux de l’histoire culturelle*. New ed. (Paris: Éd. du Seuil, 2004). See further the contributions to *Childhood in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance: The Results of a Paradigm Shift in the History of Mentality*, ed. Albrecht Classen (Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2005); Peter Dinzelbacher, *Körper und Frömmigkeit in der mittelalterlichen Mentalitätsgeschichte* (Paderborn and Munich: Ferdinand Schöningh, 2007); cf. also the seminal collection of relevant studies in *Europäische Mentalitätsgeschichte: Hauptthemen in Einzeldarstellungen*, ed. Peter Dinzelbacher. 2nd rev. ed. (1993; Stuttgart: Alfred Kröner, 2008). For a comprehensive overview, consult David F. Tinsley, “Mentalities in Medieval Studies,” *Handbook of Medieval Studies: Terms – Methods – Trends*, ed. Albrecht Classen. Vol. 1 (Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2010), 874–96.

**188** Rüdiger Schnell, *Haben Gefühle eine Geschichte?: Aporien einer History of Emotions* (Göttingen: V&R Unipress, 2015), offers a rather puzzling overview of the current state of research, primarily attacking every modern scholar who has explored this topic, trying to deconstruct the entire field, applying almost an ad personam strategy. Basically, he argues that we are too far away from the medieval period to gain access to the emotions felt by people at that time and that we have no scholarly instruments to identify critically what those emotions were like or what they might have meant. See my review in *Mediaevistik* 29 (2016): 361–64. Revealingly, his response was an angry, almost aggressive email to me personally and to other reviewers pursuing personal attacks. For much better work on this topic, see now Simo Knuuttila, *Emotions in Ancient and Medieval Philosophy* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2006). I could not yet consult *The Routledge History of Emotions 1100–1700*, ed. Andrew Lynch and Susan Broomhall (London: Routledge, 2020; appeared already in 2019). See also the research cluster organized in Australia: <http://www.historyofemotions.org.au/society-for-the-history-of-emotions/> (last accessed on Feb. 18, 2020). Brill publishes a journal dedicated exclusively to this topic: *Emotions: History, Culture, Society*. Vol. 3.1 appeared in June 2019.

**189** See, for instance, Russell L. Friedman, *Intellectual Traditions at the Medieval University: The Use of Philosophical Psychology in Trinitarian Theology Among the Franciscans and Dominicans, 1250–1350*. Studien und Texte zur Geistesgeschichte des Mittelalters, 108 (Leiden

## Hartmann von Aue's *Gregorius* – Imagination as a Threat to a Person's Path Toward God

Many times, we learn of courtly protagonists who are not yet aware of their future paths as knights but do dream about possible accomplishments. This finds vivid expression in Hartmann von Aue's *Gregorius* (ca. 1190/1200) where the young man, the result of an incestuous relationship between a young duke and his sister in Aquitaine, is raised by the family of a fishermen on behalf of the local abbot who has great delight in this substitute child. He imagines that Gregorius, whom he had named during baptism after himself, might eventually succeed him in his office because of his superior intelligence.<sup>190</sup> Tragically, however, as a young man Gregorius suddenly learns the mysterious truth of his origin and is immediately prepared to leave the monastic school and island in order to trace his origin.

To the abbot he explains that he must depart because, first, he feels deeply ashamed about the fact that he was a bastard child, the product of incest. He thus knows, second, that he is not the fisherman's child and might be the descendant of a noble family. And third, he has always imagined and dreamed about turning into a knight: “weizgot nû was ie mîn muot, / hæte ich die geburt und daz guot, / ich würde gerne riter” (1501–03; by God, it has always been my wish that, if I had the birth right and the material goods, to become a knight). He fully acknowledges that the abbot has chosen for himself the best path

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and Boston: Brill, 2013). Cf. also the contributions to *Medieval Affect, Feeling, and Emotion*, ed. Glenn Burger and Holly A. Crocker. Cambridge Studies in Medieval Literature, 107 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019). A good example of a successful and productive employment of psychology for a critical reading of a medieval text, see David Blamires, *Herzog Ernst and the Otherworld Voyage: A Comparative Study*. Publications of the Faculty of Arts of the University of Manchester, 24 (Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press 1979).

**190** Hartmanns von Aue, *Gregorius, Der arme Heinrich, Iwein*, ed. and trans. Volker Mertens. Bibliothek des Mittelalters, 6 (Frankfurt a. M.: Deutscher Klassiker Verlag, 2004); for a useful introduction, see Christoph Cormeau and Wilhelm Störmer, *Hartmann von Aue: Epoche – Werk – Wirkung*. Arbeitsbücher zur Literaturgeschichte (Munich: C. H. Beck, 1985), 110–41; see also Susan L. Clark, *Hartmann von Aue: Landscapes of Mind* (Houston, TX: Rice University Press, 1989), 90–120; most recently, Amina Šahinović, “Ehe, ‘minne’, Schuld: Widersprüche in Hartmanns ‘Gregorius’,” *Poetiken des Widerspruchs in vormoderner Erzählliteratur*, ed. Elisabeth Lienert. Contradiction Studies (Wiesbaden: Springer VS, 2019), 129–43. We need to keep also in mind that in many medieval texts, dreams could also be rejected as invalid and illusionary; see the contribution to this volume by Christa Agnes Tuczay.

through life that would eventually allow him to reach God; he himself, however, is not determined by such a wish; instead, as he repeats: “ze riterscheffe stât mîn wân” (1514; my mind aims for knighthood). The same dreamed-up goal in life finds its drastic expression in Wernher the Gardener’s *Helmbrecht* (ca. 1260/1270), and there as well the quick rise to knighthood results in a catastrophic downfall, and this in full conformity with the standard medieval notions of rigid class structures that prevent any rise up from the peasant class (Helmbrecht) to the nobility.<sup>191</sup>

Gregorius acknowledges that the abbot is correct in his opinion that it would require much exercise and training to gain the necessary skills to develop into a knight, but he finally admits that from very early on he had dreamed of, or imagined, the glory of knighthood for himself. In fact, his mind had always and constantly been filled with the idea of joining this social class and thus to gain fame and a shining reputation in public. All of his desire had aimed more for the sword than for the quill (1590), although he had consistently proven to be an outstanding student and had learned exceedingly well all the lessons assigned to him by his monastic teachers. His imagination, however, had always taken him away from the world of religious learning and pushed him toward chivalry, tournaments, and knightly accomplishments.

The abbot has finally to accept that he had been deeply wrong about young Gregorius, who obviously had led a double life, being a model student in daily practice and an ideal knight in his mind (1636).<sup>192</sup> In other words, the abbot was also a victim of his own paternal fantasies and now has to face a terrible loss in emotional and personal terms. He did not realize the young man’s origin as the son of aristocratic parents and hence his natural inclinations toward knighthood, and instead he had hoped that the monastic nurture would bring about a deep spiritual upbringing and a strong disconnect from his social background.<sup>193</sup> While Heldris of Cornwall in his thirteenth-century *Roman de Silence*

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**191** Albrecht Classen, “Rural Space in the Middle Ages and Early Modern Times: A Significant Domain Ignored For Too Long by Modern Research?,” *Rural Space in the Middle Ages and Early Modern Age: The Spatial Turn in Premodern Studies*, ed. Albrecht Classen, with the collaboration of Christopher R. Clason. Fundamentals of Medieval and Early Modern Culture, 9 (Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2012), 1–191; here 82–83.

**192** Volker Mertens, *Gregorius Eremita: Eine Lebensform des Adels bei Hartmann von Aue in ihrer Problematik und ihrer Wandlung in der Rezeption*. Münchner Texte und Untersuchungen zur deutschen Literatur des Mittelalters, 67 (Zürich and Munich: Artemis, 1978); Ulrich Ernst, *Der “Gregorius” Hartmanns von Aue: Theologische Grundlagen – legendarische Strukturen – Überlieferung im geistlichen Schrifttum*. Ordo, 7 (Cologne, Weimar, and Vienna: Böhlau, 2002).

**193** For the fundamental debate on nature versus nurture in medieval didactic literature, see the contributions to *What Nature Does Not Teach: Didactic Literature in the Medieval and Early*



examined this dialectic from a gender perspective, Hartmann signals that imagination and fantasy also play a significant role and complicate this rather simplistic binary opposition.<sup>194</sup>

Of course, as the narrator ultimately relates to us, Gregorius's very imagination then becomes the basis for his own falling into severe sinfulness, marrying his own mother and thus committing incest with her as well.<sup>195</sup> As much as the young man has fantasized all his life about the ideals of knighthood, which truly emerges as a glorious form of social existence, at least temporarily, as much all this turns out to be a severe deception by the devil. However we might have to evaluate this surprising development in this religious tale, we can be certain that the poet thus projects the profound impact of imagination in people's lives, easily leading the individual astray from the spiritual path toward God because they are so desperate to survive a mortal sickness and easily fantasize about a miracle cure, something which is still very much with us today, if we consider, for instance, the many pilgrimages to holy shrines, churches, or cathedrals (Mexico City).

## Medieval Literature and Visual Psychology

As much as the Middle Ages (both in the West and in the East) were deeply determined by religion, which often led to acrimonious conflicts and persecutions, a surprisingly large number of intellectuals and writers recognized the

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*Modern Periods*, ed. Juanita Feros Ruys. Disputatio, 15 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2008); for modern psychological perspectives, see *The Nature-Nurture Debate: The Essential Readings*, ed. Stephen J. Ceci. Essential Readings in Developmental Psychology (Oxford: Blackwell, 1999); Allan V. Horwitz, *What's Normal?: Reconciling Biology and Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016).

**194** Heldris of Cornwall, *Le roman de Silence: A Thirteenth-Century Romance*, ed. and trans. with intro. and notes by Sarah Roche-Mahdi. Medieval Texts and Studies, 10 (East Lansing, MI: Colleagues Press, 1992); for the most recent study, see Caitlin Watt, "'Car vallés sui et nient mes-cine': Trans Heroism and Literary Masculinity in Le Roman de Silence," *Medieval Feminist Forum: A Journal of Gender and Sexuality* 55. 1 (2019): 135–73; cf. also Katherine Terrell, "Competing Gender Ideologies and the Limitations of Language in *Le Roman de Silence*," *Romance Quarterly* 55.1 (2008): 35–48; see also Philip Groff and Laura McRae, "The Nature-Nurture Debate in Thirteenth-Century France," paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Psychological Association, Chicago, August 1998, online at: <https://web.archive.org/web/20141024102000/http://httpprints.yorku.ca/archive/00000014/00/Silence.htm> (last accessed on Feb. 18, 2020).

**195** David Duckworth, *Gregorius: A Medieval Man's Discovery of His True Self*. Göppinger Arbeiten zur Germanistik, 422 (Göppingen: Kümmerle, 1985).

constructedness of religion, as we would call it today, and attempted to convince their contemporaries that faith was a very personal matter that could not be imposed on others (see the anonymous *Reinfried von Braunschweig*, ca. 1280/1290; or Boccaccio's third story on the first day in the *Decameron*, ca. 1350).<sup>196</sup> By the same token, just as today, the hatred of others (xenophobia) was also a pervasive factor, as we can detect it as well in numerous medieval narratives, both literary and religious, legal and political, always predicated on the amorphous and nebulous fear of different social or ethnic groups that appeared to threaten the own identity. Others, as perceived by majority writers, could be Muslims, Jews, heretics, vagabonds, but also students, professors, artists, merchants, and so forth. Unfortunately, this is, of course, the same phenomenon as today, with the majority group projecting negative characteristics on the outsiders, which commonly leads to xenophobia, hatred, and violence. The pre-modern world had its solid share in this problem.<sup>197</sup>

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**196** Cary J. Nederman, *Worlds of Difference: European Discourses of Toleration ca. 1100–c. 1550* (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2000); see also the contributions to *Religion, Power, and Resistance from the Eleventh to the Sixteenth Centuries: Playing the Heresy Card*, ed. Karen Bollermann, Thomas M. Izbicki, and Cary J. Nederman. The New Middle Ages (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014). I myself have explored this topic from various perspectives: Albrecht Classen, "Emergence of Tolerance: An Unsuspected Medieval Phenomenon. Studies on Wolfram von Eschenbach's *Willehalm*, Ulrich von Etzenbach's *Wilhelm von Wenden*, and Johann von Würzburg's *Wilhelm von Österreich*," *Neophilologus* 76 (1992): 586–99; id., "Tolerance in the Middle Ages? The Good Heathens as Fellow Beings in the World of *Reinfried von Braunschweig*, Konrad von Würzburg's *Partonopier und Meliur*, and *Die Heideninne*," *Amsterdamer Beiträge zur älteren Germanistik* 61 (2006): 183–223; id., "Early Outreaches from Medieval Christendom to the Muslim East: Wolfram von Eschenbach, Ramon Llull and Nicholas of Cusa Explore Options to Communicate with Representatives of Arabic Islam: Tolerance Already in the Middle Ages?," *Studia Neophilologica* 84.2 (2012): 1–15; id., *Toleration and Tolerance in Medieval and Early Modern European Literature*. Routledge Studies in Medieval Literature and Culture, 8 (New York and London: Routledge, 2018); id., *Religious Toleration in the Middle Ages and Early Modern Age: An Anthology of Literary, Theological, and Philosophical Texts* (Berlin: Peter Lang, 2019).

**197** Lieselotte E. Saurma-Jeltsch, "Introduction: Facts of Otherness and Affirmation of the Self," *Images of Otherness in Medieval and Early Modern Times: Exclusion, Inclusion and Assimilation*, ed. Anja Eisenbeiß and Lieselotte E. Saurma-Jeltsch (Berlin: Deutscher Kunstverlag, 2012), 9–14; Richard Broome, "Pagans, Revels and Merovingian: Otherness in the Early Carolingian World," *The Reosurces of the Past in Early Medieval Euope*, ed. Clemens Gantner, Rosamond McKitterick, and Sven Meeser (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 155–71. See also my survey, "The Self, the Other, and Everything in Between: Xenological Phenomenology of the Middle Ages," *Meeting the Foreign in the Middle Ages*, ed. A. Classen (New York and London: Routledge, 2002), xi–lxxiii.

To state the obvious, imagination and fantasy have always played a significant role in this matter. A good example would be Rudolf von Ems's *Der gute Gerhart* from ca. 1220/30 in which the poet imagines or projects a very friendly, virtually tolerant relationship between the Christian merchant from Cologne and the Moroccan, i.e., Muslim, Castellan Stranmûr. The reality was probably very different, but the fictional account made it possible for Rudolf to imagine what conditions might be possible when representatives of the two religions encountered each other and realized that they shared the same values, ideals, ethics, and moral principles, apart from their common economic and political interests.<sup>198</sup>

All this alerts us to the significant fact that the pre-modern world was deeply determined, much more so than commonly assumed, by the tensions between the ordinary inhabitants of a community or state and foreigners, strangers, others. While this represents a somewhat different topic than the one pursued here, it still deserves to be mentioned how much the perceptions of the others were the result of imagination and fantasy. Fear of foreigners tends to be irrational and emotional, but it is real, and it represents a direct response to fanciful concepts about the threat to the self by outsiders.<sup>199</sup> It does not really matter

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**198** Meinolf Schumacher, "Toleranz, Kaufmannsgeist und Heiligkeit im Kulturkontakt mit den 'Heiden': Die mittelalterliche Erzählung 'Der guote Gêrhart' von Rudolf von Ems," *Zeitschrift für interkulturelle Germanistik* 1 (2010): 49–58; for an English translation of Rudolf's text, see now Albrecht Classen, *An English Translation of Rudolf von Ems's Der guote Gêrhart* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Press, 2016); id., "Medieval Transculturality in the Mediterranean from a Literary-Historical Perspective: The Case of Rudolf von Ems's *Der guote Gêrhart* (ca. 1220–ca. 1250)," *Journal of Transcultural Medieval Studies* 5.1 (2018): 133–60 (online at: <https://www.degruyter.com/downloadpdf/j/jtms.2018.5.issue-1/jtms-2018-0006/jtms-2018-0006.pdf>; last accessed on Feb. 18, 2020).

**199** *Fremde, Feinde und Kurioses: Innen- und Außenansichten unseres muslimischen Nachbarn*, ed. by Benjamin Jokisch, Ulrich Rebstock and Lawrence I. Conrad. Studien zur Geschichte und Kultur des islamischen Orients (Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2009); Martin Baisch, "Alterität und Selbstfremdheit: Zur Kritik eines zentralen Interpretationsparadigmas in der germanistischen Mediävistik," *Die Aktualität der Vormoderne: Epochenentwürfe zwischen Alterität und Kontinuität*, ed. Klaus Ridder and Steffen Patzold. Europa im Mittelalter, 23 (Berlin and Boston: Walter de Gruyter, 2013), 185–206; Nikolas Jaspert, "Fremdheit und Fremderfahrung: Die deutsch-spanische Perspektive," *'Das kommt mir Spanisch vor': Eigenes und Fremdes in den deutsch-spanischen Beziehungen des späten Mittelalters*, ed. Klaus Herbers and Nikolas Jaspert. Geschichte und Kultur der Iberischen Welt, 1 (Münster: Lit Verlag, 2004), 31–62; Hans-Henning Kortüm, "'Advena sum apud te et peregrinus': Fremdheit als Strukturelement mittelalterlicher 'conditio humana,'" *Exil, Fremdheit und Ausgrenzung im Mittelalter und früher Neuzeit*, ed. Andreas Bihrer, Sven Limbeck, and Paul Gerhard Schmidt. Identitäten und Alteritäten, 4 (Würzburg: Ergon, 2000), 115–35; Marina Münkler, *Erfahrung des Fremden: Die Beschreibung Ostasiens in den Augenzeugenberichten des 13. und 14. Jahrhunderts* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2000); *East Meets West in the Middle Ages and Early Modern Times*:

what ‘others’ are meant, whether Jews (for Christians), Huns or Magyars (for western Europeans), homosexuals (for heterosexuals), mystics (for ordinary people), lepers (for healthy individuals), etc. The entire discourse on others proves to be a direct mirror of the human mind-set and has a considerable significance for cultural history both in the pre-modern and the modern world, as illustrated, for instance, by the philosophy of Emmanuel Levinas.<sup>200</sup>

Medieval philosophers and theologians such as John Buridan were already clearly informed about impact of the mind in psychological terms over the body, analyzing in that process how the mind forms images and is intimately associated with the world of fantasy as well.<sup>201</sup> All forms of religious faith, erotic feelings, desires, longing, and fear have always operated as significant factors determining undoubtedly political, cultural, economic, and other developments. Taking all this into account, we are in a solid position to develop new approaches to the pre-modern world by way of inquiring how their imagination and fantasy operated, what they consisted of, and how they were manifested in physical form.

Mythological concepts about the past, distant worlds, religious ideas, charismatic figures, auratic spaces or locations, customs, rituals, sites in nature, or animals and other creatures have always exerted a deep influence on our modern world, not so much because the past actively intended to leave a heritage, but because the present culture has always been deeply embedded in its own tradition, whether consciously or not. History and hence our identity are intimately intertwined with the past and our own responses to its inheritance.

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*Transcultural Experiences in the Premodern World*, ed. Albrecht Classen. *Fundamentals of Medieval and Early Modern Culture*, 14 (Berlin and Boston: Walter de Gruyter, 2013); *Europa in Bewegung: Crossroads – Travelling through the Middle Ages, AD 300–1000. Lebenswelten im frühen Mittelalter*, ed. Maria Bormpoudaki, trans. Karin Schuler and Andreas Thomsen (Darmstadt: wbg Theiss, 2018).

**200** Gergely Tibor Bakos, *On Faith, Rationality, and the Other in the Late Middle Ages: A Study of Nicholas of Cusa’s Manuductive Approach to Islam*. Princeton Theological Monograph, 141 (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2011); Hans-Werner Goetz, *Die Wahrnehmung anderer Religionen und christlich-abendländisches Selbstverständnis im frühen und hohen Mittelalter (5.–12. Jahrhundert)* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2013); as to ‘othering’ within local communities, see the contributions to *Practicing Community in Urban and Rural Eurasia (1000–1600): Comparative Perspectives And Interdisciplinary Approaches*, ed. by Fabian Kümmeler, Eirik Hovden, and Judit Majorossy (Leiden and Boston: Brill, forthcoming). Emmanuel Levinas, “La Trace de l’autre,” trans. by A. Lingis. *Tijdschrift voor Philosophie* (September 1963): 605–23. Cf. the contributions to *The Face of the Other and the Trace of God: Essays on the Philosophy of Emmanuel Levinas*, ed. Jeffrey Bloechl. *Perspectives in Continental Philosophy* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2000).

**201** *Questions on the Soul by John Buridan and Others: A Companion to John Buridan’s Philosophy of Mind*, ed. Gyula Klima (Cham, Germany: Springer International Publishing, 2017).

Myths and legends such as those pertaining to Charlemagne or the medieval chastity belt, to King Arthur or saints and martyrs live from our own productive reception, and we depend on them in a quasi symbiotic relationship. Even those who deliberately reject the past as a relevant reference system for us today confirm through their own performance, value system, ideals, or fears that they are the result of this ever-ongoing myth creation process because all social actions or agreements are anchored in historical conditions created by people and their imagination.

Many scholars have already dealt with ancient and medieval myths and their impact on us today,<sup>202</sup> such as King Arthur, for instance, which strongly support the claim to be pursued here that imagination matters fundamentally, both in a historical and a modern context, providing us with the images and concepts by which we continue to operate in reality despite many changes in their public manifestation.<sup>203</sup> Despite the best efforts by countless scholars of

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**202** See the 5 volumes of the series *Mittelalter Mythen*, ed. Ulrich Müller and Werner Wunderlich (St. Gall: UVK – Fachverlag für Wissenschaft und Studium, 1996–2008); for the myth surrounding King Arthur and its impact on us today, see the contributions to *Artus-Mythen und Moderne*, ed. Sieglinde Hartmann, Thomas Le Blanc, et al. (Wetzlar: Phantastische Bibliothek Wetzlar, 2005); as to the myth of the chastity belt, see Albrecht Classen, *The Medieval Chastity Belt: A Myth-Making Process*. The New Middle Ages (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire, England, and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007); as to the myth surrounding Charlemagne, for instance, see id., “The Myth of Charlemagne: From the Early Middle Ages to the Late Sixteenth Century,” peer-reviewed online article at <http://www.charlemagne-icon.ac.uk/further-reading/articles/>; or: <http://www.charlemagne-icon.ac.uk/wp-content/blogs.dir/332/files/2016/01/Classen-2016-The-Myth-of-Charlemagne.pdf> (last accessed on Feb. 18, 2020); cf. also id., “The ‘Dirty Middle Ages’: Bathing and Cleanliness in the Middle Ages. With Emphasis on Medieval German Courtly Romances, Early Modern Novels, and Art History: Another Myth Buster,” *Bodily and Spiritual Hygiene in Medieval and Early Modern Literature: Exploration of Textual Presentations of Filth and Water*, ed. Albrecht Classen. Fundamentals of Medieval and Early Modern Culture, 19 (Berlin and Boston: Walter de Gruyter, 2017), 458–500; as to the impact of mythical figure on us today in political terms, id., “Royal Figures as Nation Builders – King Kamehameha and Charlemagne: Myth Formation in the European Early Middle Ages and in Eighteenth-and Nineteenth-Century Polynesian Hawai’i,” *Advances in Social Sciences Research Journal* 3.2 (2016): 112–15 (<http://scholarpublishing.org/index.php/ASSRJ/article/view/1837/pdf>; last accessed on Feb. 18, 2020); and in *Journal of East-West Thought* 4.6 (2016): 85–91.

**203** *Mittelalterliche Mythenrezeption: Paradigmen und Paradigmenwechsel*, ed. Ulrich Rehm. Sensus, 10 (Vienna, Cologne, and Weimar: Böhlau Verlag, 2018). See also Joseph Falaky Nagy, *Conversing with Angels and Ancients: Literary Myths of Medieval Ireland* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2018). Cf. also H. David Brumble, *Classical Myths and Legends in the Middle Ages and Renaissance: A Dictionary of Allegorical Meanings* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1998); Katherine Heinrichs, *The Myths of Love: Classical Lovers in Medieval Literature* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1990); Sabine Baring-Gould,

many different academic disciplines, there is, until today, no firm basis to confirm the historical existence of this British King Arthur. And yet, without this myth, much of medieval cultural history and our modern concept of it would be drastically diminished because he has always served exceedingly well as a focal point for public and private imagination. As Nicholas J. Higham now concludes,

That Arthur has produced extraordinary quantities of ‘smoke’ is in large part because he is so well suited to be a fulcrum of make-believe. But there is no historical ‘fire’ underlying the stories that congregated around him, just ‘highland mist’ ... Imaginative writing has license to upend the laws of physics for literary effect; Arthur belongs entirely within that sphere. When all is said and done, all we have are swirling shapes in a fantastical cloud; there is neither flame nor fire beneath. Half-imagined wraiths forming in hill mist are no foundation for our histories.<sup>204</sup>

Of course, there might be many reasons to suggest otherwise, that means to draw on a wealth of imaginary arguments that pertain to similarities of names, narrative plots, motifs, themes, and subject matters, but the historical evidence of King Arthur is not strengthened thereby. Nevertheless, which always has to be kept in mind when we are dealing with this most fundamentally mythical narrative of the entire Middle Ages, Arthur constituted one of the most influential concepts permeating the entire epoch, and in a way also modern mentality. Hence, it would simply not matter whether he was an actual historical figure; instead, we can be certain, by contrast, that he served exceedingly well for many generations from the past until today as an imaginary king of utmost glory. To cite Highman one more time, “His ever-changing story provides insights to the world-views and purposes of those who have written him, portrayed him, imagined and reimagined him, loved him and enied him, in the process adding ever more layers to his long, long tale” (279). We could easily add to this phenomenon that the history of Charlemagne or Alexander the Great served pretty much the same purpose, reflecting universal imaginations and feeding them at the same time.<sup>205</sup>

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*Medieval Myths and Legends* (Norderstedt: Books on Demand, 2019; a study that was probably based on a dissertation; I have not been able to consult it).

**204** Nicholas J. Higham, *King Arthur: The Making of the Legend* (New Haven, CT, and London: Yale University Press, 2018), 278.

**205** See, for instance, *Alexanderdichtungen im Mittelalter: Kulturelle Selbstbestimmung im Kontext literarischer Beziehungen*, ed. Jan Cölln, Susanne Friede, and Hartmut Wulfram. Veröffentlichungen aus dem Göttinger Sonderforschungsbereich 529, 1 (Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag, 2000); *Alexander the Great in Fact and Fiction*, ed. Albert B. Bosworth (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000); Daniel Ogden, *Alexander the Great: Myth, Genesis and Sexuality* (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2011). For a good listing of the many Alexander legends in East and West, see [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alexander\\_the\\_Great\\_in\\_Legend](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alexander_the_Great_in_Legend) (last accessed on Feb. 18, 2020). See also note 26 above, with further references to this mythical figure.

## Imagination, Fantasy, and Myths

As previous scholars have already pointed out numerous times, both art history and literary history provide ample evidence for the unique dimension of fantasy in the Middle Ages, irrespective of the attempts by the Church to impose its own value system and to repress alternative modes of thinking. In other words, rationalism and irrationality balance each other in often surprising ways, which requires from us as cultural historians to probe deeply into human behavior when we want to understand past events, conditions, and situations. Even within its own domains, ancient concepts and images have crept in and shaped the mind-set of the ordinary people and the cultural elites, so when we think of countless baptismal fonts, corbels, capitals, lintels, tympanons, or capitals.<sup>206</sup> As much as the authorities strongly endeavored to maintain control over the church dogma, as much did they also have to tolerate numerous ancient, often rather pagan or heathen notions and images to populate public spaces.<sup>207</sup> Thus, Ulrich Müller and Werner Wunderlich appropriately formulate:

Mythen ... sind überlieferte oder neu aktualisierte Konkretisationen von Gestalten, Geschehen, Gegenständen und Gegenden, die erzählerisch – gewissermaßen modellhaft – ein Konzept bereitstellen für das Verhältnis des Menschen zu seinen Erfahrungen und zur Welt. Vorrationalale Mythen bewahren fundamentale Wahrheiten und archaisches Wissen auf, derer sich Rationalität dann erinnert, wenn der wissenschaftlich-technische oder auch gesellschaftlich-ideologische Fortschritt ins Stolpern gerät und zu straucheln droht.<sup>208</sup>

[Myths are concretisations, passed down from history and actualized, of figure, events, objects, and places that narratively – so to speak providing a model – present a concept for a person's relationship with his/her experiences and the world. Prerational myths preserve fundamental truths and archaic knowledge, which the rational mind remembers

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**206** Fundamentally, see Jurgis Baltrušaitis, *Das phantastische Mittelalter* (see note 78). See also Rudolf Wittkower, "Marvels of the East: A Study in the History of Monsters," id., *Allegory and the Migration of Symbols*. The Collected Essays of Rudolf Wittkower; 3 (1942; London: Thames and Hudson 1977), 46–74; Daniel Poirion, *Le merveilleux dans la littérature française du Moyen Age*. Que sais-je?, 1938 (Paris: Presse Universitaire de France, 1982); *Le merveilleux: L'imaginaire et les croyances en Occident*, ed. Michel Meslin (Paris: Bordas, 1984).

**207** James R. Simpson, *Fantasy, Identity and Misrecognition in Medieval French Narrative* (Oxford, Bern, et al.: Peter Lang, 2000); Aisling Byrne, *Otherworlds: Fantasy and History in Medieval Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016).

**208** Ulrich Müller and Werner Wunderlich, "Mittelalter-Mythen: Zu Begriff, Gegenstand und Forschungsprojekt," *Herrscher, Helden, Heilige*, ed. id. Mittelalter Mythen, 1 (St. Gall: UVK – Fachverlag für Wissenschaft und Studium, 1996), IX–XIV; here X.

only then when the scientific-technical or also the social-ideological progress begins to stumble and is in danger of collapsing.]<sup>209</sup>

Olivier Reverdin perceptively formulated regarding the relevance of studying ancient myths:

L'ensemble des mythes et des légendes que les Anciens nous ont transmis, et auxquels nous donnons le nom de mythologie classique, constitue un élément essentiel de notre patrimoine. Depuis bientôt trente siècles poètes, peintres, sculpteurs, penseurs y trouvent et une source d'inspiration et un langage dont l'intelligence est nécessaire à qui veut comprendre notre civilisation.<sup>210</sup>

[The total of myths and legends which the ancients left us, and which we call classical mythology, constitutes an essential element of our inheritance. For nearly three thousand years poets, painters, sculptors, and thinkers have found there a source of inspiration and a language the intelligence of which is necessary for those who want to understand our civilization.]

In order to pursue that goal in greater depth, we would also have to draw from psychoanalysis (Sigmund Freud), the concept of the archetype (C. G. Jung), and the notions of myths (Ernst Cassirer). However, much research has already been done in that regard, and the intentions here are more specifically directed at the questions what we can learn about pre-modern imaginations and fantasies.<sup>211</sup> But the famous French scholar Jacques Le Goff needs to be cited here at length because he has already explored the topic of fantasy in contrast to reality in the Middle Ages, examining the appearance of the miraculous, the perception of time and space, the role of the human body in relationship to spirituality, the imaginary in medieval literature, and dreams.<sup>212</sup> Of course, there is much room

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**209** See also the contributions to *Il secolo di ferro: mit e realtà del secolo X: 19–25 aprile 1990*. Settimane di studio del Centro Italiano di Studi sull' Alto Medioevo, 38 (Spoleto: Presso la Sede del Centro, 1991); *Artusroman und Mythos*, ed. Friedrich Wolfzettel, Cora Dietl, and Matthias Däumer. Schriften der Internationalen Artusgesellschaft, Sektion Deutschland, Österreich, 8 (Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2010); for the opposite perspective, from the Orient to the Occident, see *L'Occident imaginaire: la vision de l'Autre dans la conscience politique arabe*, ed. Nassib Samir El-Husseini. L'âge de la démocratie (Sainte-Foy: Presses de l'Université du Québec, 1998).

**210** Olivier Reverdin, "Préface," *Lexicon iconographicum mythologiae classicae (LIMC)*, ed. Hans Christoph Ackermann and Jean-Robert Gisler. Vol. I.1 (Zürich and Munich: Artemis Verlag, 1981), VII–VIII; here VII.

**211** Albrecht Classen, "The Ambiguity of Charlemagne in Late Medieval German Literature: The De- and Reconstruction of a Mythical Figure," *Medievalia et Humanistica* N.S. 45 (2019): 1–26.

**212** Jacques Le Goff, *Phantasie und Realität des Mittelalters*, trans. from the French by Rita Höner (1985; Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1990). Here I have consulted the German translation because it was the one most easily available to me while I composed this essay.



to grow beyond his approaches and insights, though we can deeply profit from his observations.

Le Goff identifies the imaginary by way of contrasting it with the representation of reality, as commonly found in literary texts, then with symbolism, and ideology. However, as he admits, it proves to be difficult to differentiate all those terms and concepts clearly from each other since they are correlated like in a Venn diagram. The most significant categories where imagination and fantasy surface most prominently are the fields of literature and the arts, but they do not easily reveal the characteristic imaginary in themselves. They are, as Le Goff emphasizes, “eine historische Realität an sich” (10; a historical reality by itself). The genre of hagiographical literature underscores the enormous significance of the imaginary because the veneration of the saints as outlined in those texts (and also a wealth of images, sculptures, mosaics, etc.) had direct consequences in the historical, biographical reality.<sup>213</sup>

The vast corpus of miracle stories, such as composed by Caesarius of Heisterbach,<sup>214</sup> opens our eyes toward a most significant aspect of human imagination, filled with hopes, dreams, spirituality, and desires for a better life.<sup>215</sup>

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**213** Le Goff, *Phantasie und Realität* (see note 212), 10–11, wrote his study at a time when research on the sacred, on the spiritual, and on the religious components was not yet fully developed, as he himself hastens to add. See now Peter Dronke’s collection of relevant articles,

*Sacred and Profane Thought in the Early Middle Ages*. Millennio Medievale, 109 (Florence: SISMEL, Edizioni del Galluzzo, 2016); *Sacred Sites and Holy Places; Exploring the Sacralization of Landscape Through Space and Time*, ed. Sæbjorg Walaker Nordeide (Turnhout: Brepols, 2013); Elisabeth Mégier, *Scripture and History in the Middle Ages/Schriftsinn und Geschichte im Mittelalter: Studies in Latin Biblical Exegesis (ca. 350–ca. 1150)/Untersuchungen zur Bibelauslegung in der lateinischen Kirche (ca. 350–ca. 1150)*. Beihefte zur Mediaevistik, 23 (Frankfurt a. M.: Peter Lang, 2018). See also *Sacred and Secular in Medieval and Early Modern Cultures: New Essays*, ed. Laurence Besserman. The New Middle Ages (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018). Cf. Gottfried Kerscher, *Hagiographie und Kunst: Der Heiligenkult in Schrift, Bild und Architektur* (Berlin: Reimer, 1993); Patricia Xox Miller, *The Corporeal Imagination: Signifying the Holy in Late Ancient Christianity*. Divinations: Rereading Late Ancient Religion (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009); Julia Ricker, *Reliquienkult und Propaganda: Translationsbildzyklen im Mittelalter* (Weimar: VDG Weimar, 2013). The literature on this topic is legion by now.

**214** Caesarius von Heisterbach, *Dialogus miraculorum*, trans. and commentary by Nikolaus Nösges and Horst Schneider. Fontes Christiani, 86.1–5 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2009); see also the English trans., Caesarius of Heisterbach, *The Dialogue on Miracles*, trans. H. von E. Scott and C. C. Swinton Bland. 2 vols. (London: George Routledge & Sons, 1929).

**215** Ronald C. Finucane, *Miracles and Pilgrims: Popular Beliefs in Medieval England* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 1995); *Mirakel im Mittelalter: Konzeptionen, Erscheinungsformen, Deutungen*, ed. Martin Heinzelmann, Klaus Herbers, and Dieter R. Bauer. Beiträge zur Hagiographie, 3 (Stuttgart: Steiner, 2002); *Heilig: transkulturelle Verehrungskulte vom Mittelalter bis in die*

Huge amounts of financial resources and political capital, physical labor and intellectual efforts were invested throughout the medieval and early modern era in order to reach out to the sacred in the hope that a miracle could occur in the case of disastrous, catastrophic, desperate situations. Of course, the cult of sainthood continues until today, and the Catholic Church has never stopped working on sacrality by bestowing the status of sanctity (canonization) on individuals who had produced miracles (Pater Damian, Hildegard of Bingen), for instance. Miraculous healing is reported about quite commonly, whether based on actual physical processes, or based on imaginary powers that brought about the healing.<sup>216</sup> The modern world no longer seems to believe in miracles, but every religious community is predicated on the assumption that there is a higher power that could perform or does perform miracles, at all times. When we talk about religious concepts, we simply open another facet of human imagination which endeavors to reach out to a divine entity.

## The Imaginary in the Mystical Visions by Hildegard of Bingen

Research on mysticism in the Middle Ages has reached a high level of maturity by now, focusing especially on the religious components, gender issues, political and social-economic implications, and theological questions. Those medieval visionaries, such as Mechthild of Magdeburg, Marguerit Porète, Catherine of Siena, Bridget (Brigitte) of Sweden, Julian of Norwich, or Margery Kempe, but then also Godfrey of Saint-Victor, Heinrich Seuse and Johannes Tauler, to name just a few, have always predicated their experiences on visions, and they were followed in that respect by such sixteenth-century spiritualists as Jacob Böhme and Valentin Weigel. Whether it makes sense to draw on psychology in order to

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*Gegenwart*, ed. Dietlind Hüchtker and Kerstin S. Jobst (Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag, 2017); Axel Rührt, *Imaginationen der Angst: Das christliche Wunderbare und das Phantastische* (Berlin and Boston: Walter de Gruyter, 2018); *Miracles in medieval canonization processes: Structures, Functions and Methodologie*, ed. Christian Krötzel and Sari Katajala-Peltomaa. *International Medieval Research*, 23 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2018).

**216** Jacalyn Duffin, *Medical Miracles: Doctors, Saints, and Healing in the Modern World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009); see also the contributions to *Marvels, Monsters, and Miracles: Studies in the Medieval and Early Modern Imaginations*, ed. by Timothy S. Jones. *Studies in Medieval Culture*, 42 (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, 2002). Cf. Tara Williams, *Middle English Marvels: Magic, Spectacle, and Morality in the Fourteenth Century* (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2018).

understand the actual mental processes or whether we should carefully distinguish between the spiritual and the intellectual even in these cases, remains a matter of debate that cannot be decided here.

From a cultural-historical perspective, however, we can be certain that the mystics exerted a tremendous influence far and wide, not only on religious communities, but even on the highest religious authorities, including intellectual giants such as Bernard of Clairvaux and Pope Eugene III. This was especially the case with Hildegard of Bingen, whose *Book of Divine Works* can serve here as an illustration of how much the investigation of the history of imagination and fantasy – here understood with no preconceived notions or prejudice – can serve us well to discover additional perspectives toward the pre-modern mind-set and cultural conditions.<sup>217</sup> After all, as Bernard McGinn has pointed out already some years ago, mysticism is closely associated with or determined by visuality and the concretization of imagination.<sup>218</sup>

Many of the mystics met with great suspicion and then also respect. However, Marguerite de Porète was burned at the stake in 1310, and Joan of Arc suffered the same horrible destiny in 1430. Nevertheless, their revelations were, when accepted by the authorities, regarded as divine prophecies and, after they had been recorded in writing, viewed as major religious documents of the highest caliber, perhaps comparable to those texts originally composed by the prophets in the Old Testament.

After all, mystical visions consisted of personal meetings, exchanges, and conversations with saints, the Virgin Mary, and Christ Himself. While most other faithful were supposed at least to believe the biblical story and to worship the saints and the various divine figures, the mystics claimed to have had direct meetings or encounters in which all other imaginations and fantasies found their concrete realizations in an extraordinary fashion. This does not mean, however, that we can judge those mystical texts as either ‘true’ in their religious message, or as ‘false’ or ‘fake’ in their allegedly skewed expression of mostly female ‘hysteria.’ The historical documents have always confirmed that the mystics struggled hard to find a way toward the written word, to public recognition, and, above all,

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**217** Karen-Claire Voss, “Imagination in Mysticism and Esotericism: Marsilio Ficino, Ignatius de Loyola, and Alchemy,” *Studies in Spirituality* 6 (1996): 106–30.

**218** Bernard McGinn, “Hildegard of Bingen as Visionary and Exegete,” *Hildegard von Bingen in ihrem historischen Umfeld: internationaler wissenschaftlicher Kongreß zum 900jährigen Jubiläum, 13. – 19. September 1998, Bingen am Rhein*, ed. Alfred Haverkamp and Alexander Reverchon (Mainz: Philipp von Zabern, 2000), 321–50; cf. also *Zeugnis und Zeugenschaft: Perspektiven aus der Vormoderne*, ed. Wolfram Drews and Heike Schlie. Trajekte (Paderborn: Fink, 2011).

to sustain this encounter with the divine Godhead which tended to overwhelm them in its forcefulness. Whatever we might want to make out of their visions, they certainly mirror medieval notions of the Otherworld of imagination, whether we would have to dismiss those revelations as pure fantasy or not, as unreasonable as the latter option certainly would be. Most of the mystics enjoyed a high reputation, were believed in having received their visions, and thus as recipients of divine grace.

Here I choose, to illustrate the phenomenon that concerns us specifically, Hildegard of Bingen's *Book of Divine Words*, composed between 1163 and 1172 and completed finally after some revisions in 1174.<sup>219</sup> It does not matter for us how and why the vision came to Hildegard, whether they were 'real' or not, but she recognized it as a divine message, so she could not help but to record it for posterity that would thus be graced with those spiritual insights and could thus partake in the mystical revelation as a proxy. We also would have to consider that Hildegard was a highly learned woman and obviously drew from many classical and medieval sources, probably also from some Arabic texts in translation.<sup>220</sup>

The mystical experience is fundamentally predicated on the vision, a spiritual form of seeing, an esoteric form of imagination. As Hildegard formulates it at the beginning of her text:

And I saw as if in the middle of the southern sky an image, beautiful and wonderful in the mystery of God, like a human in form. Her face was of such beauty and radiance that I could more easily look at the sun than at her; and a great circlet of golden color surrounded her head. Above that head, moreover, in the same circlet appeared another face as of an old man, whose chin and beard touched the crown of the [lower] head. And from each side of the figure's neck a single wing came forth, [both] rising up to join together above the aforementioned circlet. (1)

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**219** St. Hildegard of Bingen, *The Book of Divine Works*, trans. Nathaniel M. Campbell (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2018); for the critical edition, see Hildegardis Bingensis, *Liber Divinorum Operum*, ed. A[libert] Derolez and P[eter] Dronke. *Corpus Christianorum Continuatio Mediaevalis*, XCII (Turnhout: Brepols, 1996); for a global overview, see Andrew Weeks, *German Mysticism from Hildegard of Bingen to Ludwig Wittgenstein: A Literary and Intellectual History* (Albany NY: State University of New York Press, 1993); Rainer Berndt, *"Im Angesicht Gottes suche der Mensch sich selbst": Hildegard von Bingen (1098–1179)* (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 2001); *A Companion to Hildegard of Bingen*, ed. Beverly Mayne Kienzle. *Brill's Companions to the Christian Tradition*, 45 (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2014); Peter Dinzelbacher, *Vision und Visionsliteratur im Mittelalter*. 2nd rev. and expanded ed. *Monographien zur Geschichte des Mittelalters*, 64 (Stuttgart: Anton Hiersemann, 2017); id., *Vision und Magie* (see note 18).

**220** See the introduction to the Latin edition of her text, ed. Derolez and Dronke (see note 219), xiii–xxxv.

Much of what she and other mystics report is deeply determined by the visual element, commonly associated with brilliant light through which the divine figure comes and communicates with the recipient. Whereas the ordinary faithful was only able to look up to altarpieces, stained glass windows, frescoes, or sculptures scattered throughout medieval churches, or at miniature paintings in private Book of Hours, hoping to gain a sense of the transcendental by way of the material medium, this mystic was suddenly transported into an esoteric dimension where a new form of epistemology was possible because she could see both with her physical and with her spiritual eyes.<sup>221</sup> Images of mirrors, breath, and fire permeate her text and suggest that she wanted to pursue a spiritual form of knowledge. In one of her letters (*Ep.* 171, p. 389) “she writes that the human being who wants to pass into (heavenly) life ‘must have the mirroring scrutiny of the spirit of living eyes.’”<sup>222</sup>

As much as we moderns might be dismissive of fantasy as entirely fictional and hence irrelevant, such as in fantasy novels, fairy tales, science fiction literature and movies, we cannot deny that we continue to embrace imagination and also fantasy as phenomena that take place in our mind and connect us more often than not with the world of spirituality. When Hildegard describes in more detail what her vision looked like, she resorts to very concrete terms for colors, shapes, and forms, insisting thereby on the veracity of her vision and their concrete reality:

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**221** For a broader approach, see Bernard McGinn, *The Growth of Mysticism: Gregory the Great Through the 12th Century*. The Presence of God: A History of Western Christian Mysticism, 2 (New York: Crossroad, 1996); cf. also Albrecht Classen, “Taste, Sound, and Smell in the Mystical Realm: Visionary Phenomenology on the Basis of Sensual Experiences: Agnes Blannbekin (d. 1315),” *Studies in Spirituality* 19 (2009): 71–91; id., “The Dialectics of Mystical Love in the Middle Ages: Violence/Pain and Divine Love in the Mystical Visions of Mechthild of Magdeburg and Marguerite Porète,” *Studies in Spirituality* 20 (2010): 143–60; id., “Gender Crossing, Spiritual Transgression, and the Epistemological Experience of the Divine in Mystical Discourse: Hildegard of Bingen,” *Medieval Perspectives* 18 (2003/2011): 50–78. The literature on this broad topic is legion, and I would have to refer, above all, to the many studies by Peter Dinzelbacher. Emphasizing that the mystical discourse reflects an important aspect of human imagination is not intended to belittle mysticism by itself or to deprive it of its religious essence, especially because I would certainly want to refrain from a rational interpretation of the mystical experience, whereas we are fully entitled to examine its manifestation in written or visual form with all our tools of critical scholarship available to us.

**222** Derolez and Dronke, “Introduction” (see note 219), xxxi (Dronke). Dronke also emphasizes Hildegard’s use of images pertaining to breath, wind, the cosmos, which altogether helped her to project a “humanised cosmos, even while being the *instrumentum* on which the divine creator plays” (xxxiv).

Furthermore, from each shoulder of this image, a single wing stretched forth down to her knees. She was clothed with a robe like the brilliance of the sun, and in her hands she held a lamb, shining like the light of day. Moreover, she was treading with her feet a monster, dreadful in appearance and venomous and black in color, and also a serpent that had fixed its mouth upon the right ear of the monster and, wrapping the rest of its body around the monster's head, had stretched its tail along the monster's left side all the way to its feet. (2)

As soon as we turn to the following section, Hildegard quotes the divine voice that represents life and constitutes all life forces, being the root of everything:

Therefore I, the fiery force, lie hidden within these things, and they burn because of me, just as breath continually moves a human being and a flickering flame exists within the fire. All these things live in their essences and were not found in death, because I am life. I am also rationality, possessing the breath of the resounding Word through which every created thing was made; and into all these things I blew, so that none of them is mortal in its nature, because I am life. I am life indeed pure and whole, which was not hewn from stones, and it neither blossomed from branches nor took root from man's sexual power; but every living thing has taken root in me. For rationality is the root, and the resounding Word flourishes within it. (2–3)

Intriguingly, Hildegard then has the divine voice explain to her the fundamentals of all Christian teachings, here apparently derived from God Himself. Imagination hence might no longer be the appropriate term because much learning and rational commentary subtly enter the discourse. Nevertheless, the poetic quality of her account, along with the analytic rigor of the comments provided build major bridges between herself as a mystic and the divine force, and then also establishes significant bonds with the human audience that finds itself reconfirmed in its theological learning and yet is confronted with powerful imaginary elements:

But I also fulfill my function, since all living things are set ablaze from me; and I am uniform life in eternity, which neither begins nor ends. God is this life, self-moving and active, yet one life in three energies. Therefore, Eternity is called the Father, the Word is called the Son, and the breath connecting these two is called the Holy Spirit, just as God is signified in human beings, in whom are body, soul, and rationality. Moreover, the fact that 'I flame above the beauty of the fields,' this signifies the earth, which is that material from which God made Man. And the fact that 'I shine in the waters,' this accords with the soul, since, just as water floods the whole earth, so the soul permeates the whole body. But the fact that 'I burn in the sun and in the moon,' this signifies rationality, and the stars are the countless words of rationality. And when 'with the airy wind I quicken all things with some invisible life that sustains them all,' this is because by the air and wind subsist living things as they grow, moved out of nothingness into existence." (3)

As much as Hildegard reports of a mystical revelation, hence of what she had witnessed in her mind, unless it was a real, concrete apparition, which we cannot

verify, of course, as much does she also reveal her mind-set, the realm of her spiritual being:

And a great circlet of golden color surrounds her head, because the catholic faith, spread throughout the whole world and rising in the first dawn of exceptional brilliance, embraces the excellence of true Love's abundance with every devotion, as when God redeemed humankind in his Son's humanity and strengthened them by pouring the Holy Spirit into them. (4)

Altogether, we might argue that the unique features of mysticism represented the extraordinary interplay between the mind and the body, the spiritual and the doctrinal. It would not be appropriate to talk about fantasy in the modern sense of the word, but Hildegard, like all other mystics, was graced with direct access to the religious fantastic, if that makes sense. We have no way of verifying or falsifying her account, but we can be certain that the mystical vision constituted one of the most powerful representations of imagination from the Middle Ages. Here, more than probably anywhere else in the history of western culture, the visionary's account created a unique bridge between the human word and the divine, imaginary, or fanciful word. This discourse, however, dignified human existence because it is thus identified as a worthy vessel of the divine message.<sup>223</sup> As Hildegard would agree full-heartedly, there is no physical reality without its base, the spiritual existence. In Peter Dronke's words: "Just as the universe had appeared to Hildegard in the form first of an egg and later of a wheel, so the semblance of Caritas changes, in a way that includes but also goes beyond *ornatus* in the sense of outer adornment."<sup>224</sup> Finally, Hildegard does not only describe the visionary dimension and the figure of Christ, but she also reduces herself as the mere recipient of the revelation and makes God to the absolute authority. In short, the world of vision counts almost completely, whereas the world of material conditions is practically to be dismissed as worthless.<sup>225</sup> Little wonder that

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**223** Albrecht Classen, "Introduction: The Authority of the Written Word, the Sacred Object, and the Spoken Word: A Highly Contested Discourse in the Middle Ages, With a Focus on the Poet Wolfram von Eschenbach and the Mystic Hildegard von Bingen," *Authorities in the Middle Ages: Influence, Legitimacy, and Power in Medieval Society*, ed. Sini Kangas, Mia Korpiola, and Tuija Aionen. Fundamentals of Medieval and Early Modern Culture, 12 (Berlin and Boston: Walter de Gruyter, 2013), 1–24.

**224** Derolez and Dronke, "Introduction" (see note 219), lxxvii (Dronke).

**225** Derolez and Dronke, "Introduction" (see note 219), lxxxiii (Dronke). See also Rebecca Milena Fuchs, *Zur Anschauung von "Leben" bei Hildegard von Bingen: ein Schnittpunkt von Poesie und Theologie* Veröffentlichungen des Grabmann-Institutes zur Erforschung der mittelalterlichen Theologie und Philosophie (Berlin and Boston: Walter de Gruyter, 2016); Keiko Suzuki, *Bildgewordene Visionen oder Visionserzählungen: Vergleichende Studie über die Visionsdarstellung in der Rupertsberger "Scivias"-Handschrift und im Luccheser "Liber divinatorum operum"-Codex der Hildegard von Bingen*. Neue Berner Schriften zur Kunst, 5 (Bern, Berlin, et al.: Peter Lang, 1998).

the mystics and their discourse was at first viewed with awe and deep respect, but in the course of time also with fear and skepticism because it began to appear as informed by the devil or evil spirits, and not by God. Nevertheless, from our perspective, here we recognize powerful expressions of visual perceptions that transcend the physical barriers and constitute the fundamental concept of a religious conversation with the divine.<sup>226</sup> Finally, it deserves to be noted that the entire history of mystics and spiritualists from the early Middle Ages until today has been determined by the notion that the universe is much larger than the individual, whereas institutionalized religion and science have created false barriers, jarred the clear vision, and blocked our view to the totality of being because of poor or wrong imagination and fantasy. As Karen-Claire Voss notes,

the universe is ontologically whole, and therefore, that the separation felt so acutely between the mystics and God, between the natural magicians of the Renaissance and the cosmos, and between the alchemists and the Philosopher's Stone was not the reflection of a correct ontology; rather, it was the legacy of a flawed conceptual framework. Thus mystics, magicians, and alchemists all had to embark on a process of what could be described as 'sacred deconstruction' before they were able to reach their goal.<sup>227</sup>

Little wonder that until today science fiction, for instance, appeals so much to modern viewers and readers because it opens a window toward an imagined world that is potential and yet not quite visible in material terms. Medieval mystics such as Hildegard of Bingen or Bridget of Sweden, Julian of Norwich or Theresa of Avila, but then also many spiritualists in the subsequent centuries were deeply aware of the meaning of their visions, but could not convey their epistemological transformation in a rational discourse.

## Bernard of Clairvaux

Every faith, whether Christian, Jewish, Muslim, Hindu, or Buddhist, is predicated on imagination. This is not meant pejoratively; faith is simply a concept the individual believes in without having any solid, real proof. In essence, the

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<sup>226</sup> See, for instance, Susanne Wegmann, "Der reformatorische Blick: Sehen oder Hören – welche Sinneswahrnehmung führt zu Gott?," *Sehen und Sakralität in der Vormoderne*, ed. David Ganz and Thomas Lentjes. KultBild: Visualität und Religion in der Vormoderne, 4 (Berlin: Dietrich Reimer, 2011), 293–301. See also the contributions to *Ästhetik des Unsichtbaren: Bildtheorie und Bildgebrauch in der Vormoderne*, ed. David Ganz and Thomas Lentjes. KultBild. Visualität und Religion in der Vormoderne, 1 (Berlin: Dietrich Reimer, 2004).

<sup>227</sup> Karen-Claire Voss, "Imagination in Mysticism and Esotericism" (see note 217), 106.



entire world of medieval Christianity, for instance, was based on imaginations, but this does not diminish the value of this religion and its organization at large. Every religious text, whether the various types of Scriptures or theological treatises, addresses a form of fantasy, which is not meant here in negative terms. Every preacher, both then and today, draws from intangibles and urges his/her listeners/readers to pursue religious ideals, whether they are realistic or not. Let us illustrate this with just one example, the parable “De Aethiopissa quam filius regis duxit uxorem” by Bernard of Clairvaux.<sup>228</sup>

The famous Cistercian abbot (1190–1253) emphasizes that there are four types of temptations (“tentationes”) in human life, brought about by specific conditions: misfortune, fortune, deception or hypocrisy, and by the devil’s temptations. Most important appears to be the highly pervasive force of deception, projecting a scenario that can mislead the individual badly from his/her predetermined path and bring about seduction to commit a sin, for instance (856).

Bernard outlines also four strategies which the individual can pursue at night to combat the temptations: using bravery against misfortune, moderation protecting the individual from fortune; justice which fights against deception; and finally, intelligence against the devil’s angels (858). Temptations are never going away, and they are also present in the church, whether the martyrs’ fear at night, the heretical beliefs, the hypocrisy everywhere:

hypocrisim quasi in tenebris, id est in simulationibus suis, totam videmus ecclesiam perambuantem et simulatoria vel, si qua vere haber bona, pro vili mercede, id est human laude vel umana retributione, distrahentem. (858)

[Hypocrisy permeates, so to speak in the darkness of the night, that is, in its simulations, the entire Church and wastes away the goods, whether imagined or true ones, for a cheap reward, that is, human praise or human payment.]

As to be expected, Bernard regarded false teachings as one of the worst challenges for all Christians, thus identified the grave danger and difficulty for the faithful to differentiate properly between the true and the false faith. Imagination, in other words, operates everywhere, and the individual faces greatest dangers in his/her attempts to pursue the true faith. The author then resorts to an extensive parable in order to illustrate his teachings, but he has to draw from images of fantasy and biblical poetry in order to explain his message. For instance, he refers to a variety of physical objects which the bridegroom (Christ) brings to his chosen

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**228** Bernhard von Clairvaux, *Sämtliche Werke lateinisch/deutsch*, ed. Gerhard B. Winkler. Vol. IV (Innsbruck: Tyrolia-Verlag, 1993), 856–74. Bernard has been recognized as one of the most important intellectuals and theologians of his time; so there would not be any need here to include relevant biographical studies.

bride, and thus combines theology with imagination, which suddenly almost sound very similar, such as symbolic shoes: “Cordubani itaque sunt vel duo Testamenta, vel continentia et caritas; ligaturae, professio et oboedientia” (864; The shoes either mean the two Testaments, or, continence and love; the shoe laces mean commitment and obedience).

Of course, there is nothing unusual about Bernard’s approach; instead, he simply operates like every other religious writer, utilizing the material dimension in order to explain the spiritual one. The bond between both consists of imagination, the metaphor, or the symbolism of the object. For instance, when he describes Christ, he resorts to the image of the five windows: “id est incarnatio, conversatio, doctrina eius, resurrectio, ascensio, per quae illa quinque quae de contemplatione dicta sunt videntur” (868; this is, incarnation, conversion, His doctrine, resurrection, and ascension; through those five [windows] one perceives the five themes prescribed for the contemplation).

In the final conclusion, Bernard offers the intriguing image of those who prefer silver and gold over Christ, like those who stay in the devil’s tent; and those who prefer women, food, expensive drinks, jokes, singing, and other entertainments over Christ, thus being nothing but guests in the devil’s tavern (874).<sup>229</sup> In fact, Bernard proves his high literary quality as a writer whenever he draws from ordinary episodes in human life in order to illustrate spiritual aspects. In “De octo beatitudinibus” (874), for instance, he compares the heavenly sphere with a monk who packs and readies all of his wares when he hears that a market will take place in the near future. Of course, when he encounters Christ who demands from him to open his bundles and to explain to Him their content, we quickly understand that the monk is bent on selling spiritual wares: poverty and misery, meekness, hunger, thirst, paucity, then tears, crying, and lamenting, purity of the heart, etc.

The author draws, as any good writer does, from practical experiences and transforms them step by step into spiritual messages, that is, metaphorizes them and transforms them into religious teachings. This is primarily possible,

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<sup>229</sup> For the relevance of the world of entertainment, both in concrete and in symbolic terms, in the Middle Ages, see now the contributions to *Pleasure and Leisure in the Middle Ages* (2019; see note 64). Bernard’s remarks, which I discovered only after the ms. had already been readied for printing (June 2019), confirm and expand on our findings in that volume insofar as pleasure and leisure could be discussed even within a theological context, serving as metaphors for religious teachings. In my own contribution, “Drinking, Partying, and Drunkenness in Late Medieval German Verse: Narratives and Jest Narratives,” 395–431, I am addressing the issue of drunkenness as a theme in medieval and early literature, offering also a number of comments on non-German texts.

however, because the reader possesses imagination and can visualize what the narrator presents to him/her, whereupon the deep learning follows. Bernard does not investigate in these passages the actual nature of imagination or fantasy, but applies universal insights into the workings of the human mind that allow him to develop his theological teachings.

## Imagination of the Virgin Mary

The veneration of the Virgin Mary by way of music, text, image, or sculpture was a very common practice throughout the pre-modern world (and continues, of course, until today), and in that process countless artists and writers were involved producing a wealth of art works and narratives and poems addressing the mother of God.<sup>230</sup> These are all significant examples of imagination, here religious in nature, which impacted people's lives deeply, obviously because human existence has always proven to be contingent, unpredictable, fraught with problems, worries, fears, and dangers. As the iconographic motif of the "Schutzmantelmadonna" (the Madonna providing protection for all people underneath her wide coat) indicates, for instance, the image of the Mother of God was of greatest significance, suggesting that there was help available because the Virgin Mary would certainly speak to Her son and appeal to His mercy upon the individual's request.<sup>231</sup> Countless art works and literary texts suggest how much the viewer/reader/listener was supposed to accept the religious message and to transform in that process, while intently gazing onto and also into the visual, into a devout individual (Fig. 3). We can thus always rely on the material manifestation as a medium to identify the mind-set behind the art work.

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**230** Anna Russakoff, *Imagining the Miraculous: Miraculous Images of the Virgin Mary in French Illuminated Manuscripts, ca. 1250–ca. 1450*. Studies and Texts, 215; Text Image Context: Studies in Medieval Manuscript Illumination, 7 (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 2019). For a review, see now Juan Carlos Bayo in *Mediaevistik* 32 (forthcoming).

**231** The cult of the Virgin Mary was pervasive and ubiquitous throughout the Middle Ages and well beyond. See, for instance, the contributions to *Madoanna: Frau – Mutter – Kultfigur: eine Ausstellung des Niedersächsischen Landesmuseums Hannover ...*, ed. Katja Lembke (Dresden: Sandstein Verlag, 2015); Donna Spivey Ellington, *From Sacred Body to Angelic Soul: Understanding Mary in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2001); Jaroslav Pelikan, *Mary Through the Centuries: Her Place in the History of Culture* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1996); Klaus Schreiner, *Maria: Jungfrau, Mutter, Herrscherin* (Munich and Vienna: Carl Hanser Verlag, 1994). The literature on this topic is legion.



Fig. 3: Schutzmantelmadonna, Venice, near the Rialto bridge (© Albrecht Classen)

As Alison Beringer has demonstrated in the case of one of the Marian narratives contained in the *Klosterneuburger Evangelienwerk* (ca. 1340), the spectator or reader was urged to bridge the difference between him/herself and the Virgin Mary and to feel the same pain as the mother of God had to experience. In that process, imagination triggers, as we can assume, a transformation of an intellectual perception into a lived sensation of deep empathy, if not even physical pain.<sup>232</sup>

One of the most charming examples proves to be the short verse narrative, *Del Tumbeor Nostre Dame* from ca. 1200 in which a tumbler somehow manages to be accepted into a Cistercian monastery but quickly realizes that he is not able to participate in the expected rituals during the liturgy and feels terrified that he might be kicked out again. He is filled with deep devotion to the Virgin Mary and wants to do whatever it takes to perform the basic service on her behalf. Consequently, out of desperation regarding his inability, he searches for an alternative to the standard performances by the other monks who command the necessary intellectual skills to participate in the mass. The tumbler retires to the crypt of their monastery and utilizes the empty space to perform his professional vaults and jumps in front of a sculpture of the Virgin Mary. In this

<sup>232</sup> Alison L. Beringer, "Imaginatio, Bilder und Texte: Die Marienklage im *Klosterneuburger Evangelienwerk* der Stadtbibliothek Schaffhausen," *Imagination und Deixis* (2007; see note 159), 141–51.

process the tumbler feels a deep sense of accomplishment and satisfaction, although he is not sure at all whether the Virgin would accept his humble acts of devotion for her.

The situation then takes a dramatic turn because he is soon observed by another monk who felt suspicions about his regular absence from mass, but instead of criticizing the tumbler, he quickly understands that he is performing the same service for the Virgin Mary as they do, not through prayer and reading the psalter, for instance, but through a playful, dance-like act. Indeed, the monk realizes that while they all pray for this poor man, he is playing for them, achieving the same level of spirituality in physical terms as they do in intellectual terms. He laughs out of happiness about what he has witnessed, and then informs the abbot. The two then return to the crypt and are blessed with a divine vision.

To their astonishment, they then notice that the tumbler carries out this service to such an extent that eventually, unbeknownst to himself, the Mother of God, with a host of angels, appears and graces him for his deep faith and devotion that he has demonstrated through his action, drying the perspiration on his forehead. Instantly, the abbot realizes that a true miracle has happened here, and instead of expelling the simple man who cannot perform the duties of a monk, he praises him as a true saint, begging him to pray for the entire monastic community. The playful performance in the crypt thus emerges as the best manifestation of honest and profound faith.<sup>233</sup>

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**233** *The Tumbler of Our Lady (Le Jongleur de Notre Dame) and Other Miracles*, trans. from the Middle French with intro. and notes by Alice Kemp-Welch. The New Medieval Library (London: Chatto and Windus, 1908), 3–29; online at: <https://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/008674804> (last accessed on Feb. 18, 2020); C. H. C. Wright, *A History of French Literature* (1912; New York: Haskell House Publishers, 1969), 55, already determined that this Marian legendary tale, which he identified as “Tombeor Nostre Dame,” did not originate from Gautier. See the edition by Wendelin Foerster, “Del tumbleor Nostre Dame,” *Romania* 2 (1873): 315–25; see also *Del tumbleor Nostre Dame: altfranzösische Marienlegende (um 1200)*, ed. Erhard Lommatzsch. Romanische Texte zum Gebrauch für Vorlesungen und Übungen, 1 (Berlin: Weidmann, 1920); *Le jongleur de Notre-Dame*, traduit et commenté par Paul Bretel. Traductions des classiques français du Moyen Âge, 64 (Paris: H. Champion; Geneva: Editions Slatkine, 2003). See also the impressive webpage with the relevant bibliographical information, at: [https://www.arlima.net/qt/tumbleor\\_nostre\\_dame.html](https://www.arlima.net/qt/tumbleor_nostre_dame.html) (last accessed on Feb. 18, 2020). For a solid critical analysis, focusing on the reception history, see Jan M. Ziolkowski, “Juggling the Middle Ages: The Reception of Our Lady’s Tumbler and Le Jongleur de Notre-Dame,” *Studies in Medievalism* XV (2006): 157–97; for a critical study of this text in a broader cultural context, see Albrecht Classen, “The Challenges of the Humanities, Past, Present, and Future: Why the Middle Ages Mean So Much For Us Today and Tomorrow,” *Thaloris* 2 (2017): 191–217; here 203. To be sure, this narrative does not appear in the critical editions by Gautier, as has often been assumed; see, for example, Gautier de Coincy, *Les*

As the narrative thus indicates, true spirituality could be achieved in various ways, and was not bound by the rituals officially performed by monks and other members of the clergy. The audience is simply expected to believe this account, which certainly proves to be heart-warming even today because it suggests so intuitively that everyone could achieve one's goal in life if one only believes firmly in this possibility. The tumbler had no chance ever to acquire the intellectual capabilities of the other monks, but in his heart he was more devoted and passionate about his belief in the Virgin Mary than all the others. This narrative thus projects in a most meaningful way the power of imagination, here in the form of tumbling through which the poor man gives everything he has in order to reach out to the Mother of God.<sup>234</sup>

We have to realize here that he imagines in most vivid terms what the ideal strategy would be to please the Virgin. He personalizes her and does what any person would do to please one's lord, or superior. In his simplicity he hits upon the only authentic and meaningful way to achieve this goal because his actions, the tumbling, are the result of his deepest desires and feelings for the mother of God. This is not a criticism of the monks who closely follow the rituals and observe all the required customs, but the narrator suggests that no formalities can substitute for true passion. Indeed, the Virgin then appears in a vision, but this is visible only to the abbot and the monk; the tumbler learns about this miracle only later and is then overjoyed because his central wishes have been fulfilled because his tumbling pleased the mother of God. What he had imagined had come true; by imagining that he might achieve his most-inner dreams through

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*miracles de la Sainte-Vierge*, ed. M. l'Abbé Poquet (1857; Geneva, Slatkine Reprints, 1972). See now the massive study by Jan M. Ziolkowski, *The Juggler of Notre Dame and the Medievalizing of Modernity*. 6 volumes (Cambridge: Open Book, 2018), who focuses especially on the significant efforts in France since the late nineteenth century to use this charming tale for the reestablishment of national pride, culture, and identity.

**234** *Orte der Imagination – Räume des Affekts: die mediale Formierung des Sakralen*, ed. Elke Koch and Heike Schlie (Paderborn: Wilhelm Fink, 2016); *Image and Imagination of the Religious Self in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe*, ed. Reindert Falenburg, Walter S. Melion, and Todd M. Richardson. *Lovis Corinth Colloquium*, 1 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2007); Rabia Gregory, *Marrying Jesus in Medieval and Early Modern Northern Europe: Popular Culture and Religious Reform* (Farnham, Surrey, and Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2016); *Religion, the Supernatural and Visual Culture in Early Modern Europe: An Album Amicorum for Charles Zika*, ed. Jennifer Spinks and Dagmar Eichberger. *Studies in Medieval and Reformation Traditions*, 191 (Leiden: Brill, 2015); Robert A. Scott, *Miracle Cures: Saints, Pilgrimage, and the Healing Powers of Belief* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2010). The literature on this topic is legion, of course, especially because the Middle Ages were so deeply determined by spirituality.

his performance, he was rewarded because he carried out these somersaults and tumbles not because he was required to do so (as the monks did while performing mass), but because he wanted to do so.

However, this simple man was not alone in his religious idealism, by far not. The cult of the Virgin Mary dominated much of medieval and early modern Europe, and quickly spread to other parts of the world. As Rosilie Hernández now indicates, the belief in the Immaculate Conception permeated the entire world of early modern Spain, for instance, and the belief in miracles and divine intervention in human life never came to an end.<sup>235</sup>

## Magic, Fantasy, and the Female Wonder

One curious, but by now virtually global example proves to be the Melusine/siren logo today particularly used by the corporation Starbucks on its coffee cups, a logo, however, which can be traced back at least to the eleventh century (Otranto/Italy).<sup>236</sup> As I will discuss in my own contribution to the present volume, the world of fairies, nixies, undines, and other (female) water creatures continues to exert a significant influence on modern imagination, whether we are aware of the lines of literary-cultural traditions or not.<sup>237</sup> After all, all human life depends on water and its good quality, so there is little wonder that

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**235** Rosilie Hernández, *Immaculate Conceptions: The Power of the Religious Imagination in Early Modern Spain*. Toronto Iberic (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2019). Cf. also Bridget Heal, *The Cult of the Virgin Mary in Early Modern Germany: Protestant and Catholic Piety, 1500–1648* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007); Catherine Oakes, *Ora pro nobis: The Virgin as Intercessor in Medieval Art and Devotion* (London: Miller, 2008). See also the seminal study by Klaus Schreiner, *Maria: Jungfrau, Mutter, Herrscherin* (Munich: Hanser, 1994).

**236** See the contributions to *Melusine's Footprint: Tracing the Legacy of a Medieval Myth*, ed. Misty Urban, Deva F. Kemmis, and Melissa Ridley Elmes. *Explorations in Medieval Culture*, 4 (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2017).

**237** 550 Jahre deutsche Melusine – Couldrette und Thüring von Ringoltingen: Beiträge der wissenschaftlichen Tagung der Universitäten Bern und Lausanne vom August 2006, ed. André Schnyder and Jean-Claude Mühlethaler. Tausch, 16 (Bern: Peter Lang, 2008); Claudia Steinkämper, *Melusine – vom Schlangenweib zur “Beauté mit dem Fischeschwanz”: Geschichte einer literarischen Aneignung*. Veröffentlichungen des Max-Planck-Instituts für Geschichte, 233 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2007); see also Claude Lecouteux, *Les monstres dans la littérature allemande du Moyen âge: contribution à l'étude du merveilleux médiéval*. Göppinger Arbeiten zur Germanistik, 330. 1–3 (Göppingen: Kümmerle, 1982); Bea Lundt, *Melusine und Merlin im Mittelalter: Entwürfe und Modelle weiblicher Existenz im Beziehungs-Diskurs der Geschlechter, ein Beitrag zur historischen Erzählforschung* (Munich: Fink, 1991); see also Albrecht Classen, “Love and Fear of the Foreign: Thüring von Ringoltingen’s *Melusine*

all people in the world have associated wells, fountains, ponds, lakes, creeks, streams, rivers, and oceans with magical, hence mythical power, very often associated with mysterious female figures.<sup>238</sup>

Significantly, this epistemological process was not at all limited to the Middle Ages; instead, we observe its effectiveness in many other periods as well, even when according to Max Weber the modern world experienced its disenchantment.<sup>239</sup> Imagination, whether pertaining to realistic or fanciful aspects, appears to be a fundamental force in all of human existence, and the rise of modern, now even post-modern rationality, along with the digitization and robotization of our world, has not deprived people of their mind-set, the intellectual capacity to dream, and hence to imagine.<sup>240</sup> More specifically, postmodernity has made imagination into an ever more important facet of humanity because it constitutes the foundation of all creativity, a tool that allows the individual to turn inwards and to discover his/her spirituality, individuality, and maybe even divinity. Le Goff alerted us to the fact that the entire history of

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(1456). A Xenological Analysis," *Foreign Encounters: Case Studies in German Literature*, ed. Mara Wade & Glenn Ehrstine. *Daphnis* 33.1–2 (2004): 97–122.

**238** See the contributions to *Dämonen, Monster, Fabelwesen*, ed. Ulrich Müller and Werner Wunderlich. *Mittelalter Mythen*, 2 (St. Gall: UVK – Fachverlag für Wissenschaft und Studium, 1999); cf. also Albrecht Classen, "The Symbolic Meaning of Water in Medieval Literature: A Comparative Approach," *Mittelalterliches Jahrbuch* 46.2 (2011): 245–67; id., *Water in Medieval Literature: An Ecocritical Reading*. *Ecocritical Theory and Practice* (Lanham, MD, Boulder, CO, et al.: Lexington Books, 2018).

**239** Catherine Dedié, *Mythische Motivierung: Narrative Strukturen in Prosatexten der Frühromantik*. *Studien zur historischen Poetik*, 28 (Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag Winter, 2019); Ludwign Janus, *Vom Kosmos zur Erde – vom Mythos zur Psychologie: Die Geschichte der Philosophie als Widerspiegelung der Evolution der Mentalität und Lebensbezüge* (Heidelberg: Mettes Verlag, 2019).

**240** Michael Bailey, "The Disenchantment of Magic: Spells, Charms, and Superstition in Early European Witchcraft Literature," 111.2 (April 2006): 383–404; *Marvels, Monsters, and Miracles: Studies in the Medieval and Early Modern Imaginations*, ed. Timothy S. Jones (see note 216); Jibu Matthew George, *The Ontology of Gods: An Account of Enchantment, Disenchantment, and Re-Enchantment* (Cham, Germany: Springer International Publishing – Palgrave Macmillan, 2017); Jason Ananda Josephson, *The Myth of Disenchantment: Magic, Modernity, and the Birth of the Human Sciences* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2017); see now Allison P. Coudert, "Rethinking Max Weber's Theory of Disenchantment," *Magic and Magicians in the Middle Ages and the Early Modern Time* (2017; see note 120), 701–35. Already Lars Hanisch, *Das Unbehagen an der Entzauberung*. *Epistemata: Reihe Philosophie*, 530 (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2013), alerted us to the problematic concept of the Enlightenment. The struggle between magic (superstition), or imagination, and rationality is ongoing, even today. See now Dieter Harmening, *Wörterbuch des Aberglaubens* (Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam jun., 2005).



Christianity has always been intimately associated with that process, the effort to connect the self with the divine, which is based on imagination, as outlined already by St. Augustine, Boethius, Gregory the Great, and then by the many medieval mystics, for instance.

One of the central texts highlighting this phenomenon was Augustine's *Tractatus de trinitate* (ca. 417), sometimes identified as his most seminal study, and perhaps his masterpiece. In the tenth book the bishop-author develops a theory about the genesis and power of mental and spiritual images that are more closely associated with the self than all material concepts. Through imagination, as Augustine hence would say, the individual constitutes itself.<sup>241</sup> Images are thus much more than just visual representation; instead, they mirror the self and allow the self to develop further. However, as Le Goff underscores, perhaps more than ever before, medieval people also projected a world of eschatology, as Dante expressed it most vividly in his *Divina Commedia*, consisting of *Inferno*, *Purgatorio*, and *Paradiso*.<sup>242</sup> Nevertheless, Le Goff rightly also insists that all the various chronotopes of medieval life, whether of the garden, the field, the workshop, the monastery, the court, or the forest, were determined both by very specific, factual elements and also by imagination, which apparently weighed even more heavily than the material existence.<sup>243</sup>

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**241** Le Goff, *Phantasie und Realität* (see note 212), 14.

**242** Le Goff, *Phantasie und Realität* (see note 212), 23; see also the excellent contributions to the catalog accompanying an exhibition, *Himmel, Hölle, Fegefeuer: das Jenseits im Mittelalter*; eine Ausstellung des Schweizerischen Landesmuseums in Zusammenarbeit mit dem Schnütgen-Museum und der Mittelalterabteilung des Wallraf-Richartz-Museums der Stadt Köln, ed. Peter Jezler et al. (Zürich: Verlag Neue Zürcher Zeitung, 1994); *Jenseits: eine mittelalterliche und mediävistische Imagination: interdisziplinäre Ansätze zur Analyse des Unerklärlichen*, ed. Christa Agnes Tuczay. Beihefte zur *Mediaevistik*, 23 (Frankfurt a. M., Bern, et al.: Peter Lang, 2016); *Death in the Middle Ages and Early Modern Times: The Material and Spiritual Conditions of the Culture of Death*, ed. A. Classen. *Fundamentals of Medieval and Early Modern Culture*, 16 (Berlin and Boston: Walter de Gruyter, 2016). Very valuable continues to be Margaret Stokes, together with Adolphe Napoléon Didron and E. J. Millington, *Christian Iconography or, the History of Christian Art in the Middle Ages*. 2 vols. (1896; Norderstedt: Hansebooks GmbH, 2017). See also Alan E. Bernstein, *The Formation of Hell: Death and Retribution in the Ancient and Early Christian Worlds* (Ithaca, NY, and London: Cornell University Press, 1993); id., *Hell and Its Rivals: Death and Retribution among Christians, Jews, and Muslims in the Early Middle Ages* (Ithaca, NY, and London: Cornell University Press, 2017); *Imagining Heaven in the Middle Ages: A Book of Essays*, ed. Jan Swango. *Garland Medieval Casebooks*, 27 (New York and London: Garland, 2000); *Envisaging Heaven in the Middle Ages*, ed. Carolyn Muessig and Ad Putter. *Routledge Studies in Medieval Religion and Culture* (London and New York: Routledge, 2007); Timothy J. Clark, *Heaven on Earth: Painting and the Life to Come* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2018).

**243** Le Goff, *Phantasie und Realität* (see note 212), 23–24.

The body itself, in real life or in death, matters centrally in all epistemologies, but in the Middle Ages it was critically enriched with a vast number of imaginations about its functions, relevance, and meaning because the soul was enclosed in it (Gregory the Great).<sup>244</sup> Physical death was not a real death; instead, according to medieval, or globally Christian, concepts, it was the stepping stone for the soul on its way through the afterlife, which matters, of course, critically also in other religions.<sup>245</sup>

Do dreams, for instance, have a real impact on us as people, do they really reflect what we do, think, hope for, or fear? Can we force dreams upon ourselves, or make sense out of fantasies as they swirl around in our minds or in the collective memory when we are not awake? We know, however, that there are countless concrete documents that mirror our imagination, that is, both literary texts and art works, music and architecture, religious documents and philosophical treatises.<sup>246</sup> Every culture, every age, every people has its own approach to dreams, treating it as divinely or demonically inspired, or as prophetic, all depending on the circumstances.<sup>247</sup> The Middle Ages knew of many literary texts that were specifically predicated on the allegorical dream, such as Guillaume de Lorris's *Roman de la rose* (ca. 1230/40), continued by Jean de Meun in ca. 1270/80. In other narratives, however, dreams are dismissed as false, or ignored as irrelevant although at the end their prophetic character proves to be true after all, such as in the *Nibelungenlied* (ca. 1200).<sup>248</sup>

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**244** Le Goff, *Phantasie und Realität* (see note 212), 24–25.

**245** Romedio Schmitz-Esser, *Der Leichnam im Mittelalter: Einbalsamierung, Verbrennung und die kulturelle Konstruktion des toten Körpers*. *Mittelalter-Forschungen*, 48. 2nd unchanged ed. (2014; Ostfildern: Jan Thorbecke Verlag, 2016), trans. by Albrecht Classen and Carolin Radtke as *History of the Corpse in the Middle Ages: Embalming, Cremation, and the Cultural Construction of the Dead Body* (Turnhout: Brepols, forthcoming).

**246** E. J. Furlong, *Imagination* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1961); Harold Rugg, *Imagination* (New York: Harper & Row, 1963); Mary Warnock, *Imagination* (London: Faber and Faber, 1976); Rahel Villinger, *Kant und die Imagination der Tiere* (Constance: Konstanz University Press, 2018); Eva Mroczek, *The Literary Imagination in Jewish Antiquity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018). See also the contributions to this volume by Christa Agnes Tuczay and Emmy Herland.

**247** Jesse Keskiäho, *Dreams and Visions in the Early Middle Ages: The Reception and Use of Patristic Ideas, 400–900*. *Cambridge Studies in Medieval Life and Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015).

**248** See the contribution to this volume by Christa Agnes Tuczay. She provides a solid overview of the current and relevant research on dreams and dreambooks in the Middle Ages. See also the articles in *Träume im Mittelalter: ikonologische Studien*, ed. Agostino Paravicini Bagliani and Giorgio Stabile (Stuttgart: Belser, 1989); and in *Traum und Vision in der Vormoderne: Traditionen, Diskussionen, Perspektiven*, ed. Annette Gerok-Reiter and Christine Walde

Fear and hope, desire and anger are all emotions that open perspectives toward the other dimension in human lives. They pertain to the non-rational dimension, archaic elements, but this does not make them less significant, especially from a cultural-historical perspective. In dreams, as we often hear in medieval texts, and as we probably would confirm ourselves, those sentiments find an outlet and roam freely in our imagination, which, however, also proves to be determined by ancient, traditional notions, values, and ideals, mostly within the framework of Christianity.<sup>249</sup>

In fact, as we would have to admit, those emotions tend to determine much of our behavior, both in the past and in the present, as intangible as they might be. There is no hard evidence, for instance, for the existence of hell, a major invention by the Catholic Church since the eleventh century, and yet until today much of western morality, ethics, ideals, concepts of virtues and vices, and many other features are deeply determined by the fear of hell.<sup>250</sup> Expressions of emotions, such as through tears and grimaces, laughter and angry growls, have always exerted considerable influence and decided people's lives.<sup>251</sup>

While various scholars have already dedicated themselves intensively to the history of emotions,<sup>252</sup> here the focus will rest on the world of imagination, the result of material and psychological influences on human conditions,

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(Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 2012); Jesse Keskiaho, *Dreams and Visions in the Early Middle Ages: The Reception and Use of Patristic Ideas, 400–900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015).

**249** Jacques Le Goff, "Das Christentum und die Träume (2.–7. Jahrhundert)," id., *Phantasie und Realität* (see note 212), 271–322; cf. also Kathryn L. Lynch, *The High Medieval Dream Vision: Poetry, Philosophy and Literary Form* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1988).

**250** Peter Dinzelbacher, *Angst im Mittelalter: Teufels-, Todes- und Gottese Erfahrung: Mentalitätsgeschichte und Ikonographie* (Paderborn and Munich: Ferdinand Schöningh, 1996); Nancy Caciola, *Discerning Spirits: Divine and Demonic Possession in the Middle Ages* (Ithaca, NY, and London: Cornell University Press, 2003); eadem, *Afterlives: The Return of the Dead in the Middle Ages* (Ithaca, NY, and London: Cornell University Press, 2016).

**251** See, for example, Albrecht Classen, "Crying in Public and in Private: Tears and Crying in Medieval German Literature," *Crying in the Middle Ages: Tears of History*, ed. Elina Gertsman. Routledge Studies in Medieval Religion and Culture (New York and London: Routledge, 2012), 230–48; Judith Hagen, *Die Tränen der Mächtigen und die Macht der Tränen: eine emotionsgeschichtliche Untersuchung des Weinens in der kaiserzeitlichen Historiographie* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2017); *Histoire des émotions*, ed. Alain Corbin, Jean-Jacques Courtine, and Georges Vigarello. Vol. 1: *De l'Antiquité aux Lumières* (Paris: Seuil, 2016).

**252** See, for instance, Rob Boddice, *The History of Emotions* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2018); Barbara H. Rosenwein and Riccardo Cristiani, *What is the History of Emotions?* (Cambridge: Polity, 2018); Barbara H. Rosenwein, *Generations of Feeling:*

*A History of Emotions, 600–1700* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016); see also the contributions to *History of Emotions: Insights into Research; Geschichte der Gefühle: Einblicke*

mostly intangible, yet concretely operating in people's mind, commonly leading to actions grounded in those imaginations, dreams, or fantasies.

In the Middle Ages and well beyond, dreams normally portended the future and had to be taken seriously, as many religious and literary documents reveal to us (*Nibelungenlied*, *Njáls Saga*, *Roman de la rose*), while ignoring them or their implications could have led to catastrophic consequences, as many poets indicated.<sup>253</sup> Depending on the context and genre, the dreamer was granted prophetic power or was invited to explore the allegorical world of love. Or, in dreams the encounter between the soul and the Godhead could take place, which was not the same as mystical revelations. The other dimension of imagination as a mental capacity calls upon people in this world and encourages them to pursue an alternative direction when everything seems to go wrong, which is then cast in the form of a dream narrative, such as William Langland's *Piers Plowman* (late fourteenth century).<sup>254</sup> It is up to the individual, as many medieval narratives and poems indicate, to accept this challenge and to attempt to achieve something new in their lives.

Our world consists of images that could be direct copies of reality or that could be nothing but dream concepts, whether we think of the Middle Ages or

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in die Forschung; *Geschichte der Gefühle* (Berlin: Max-Planck-Institut für Bildungsforschung/ Forschungsbereich Geschichte der Gefühle, 2013).

**253** See the contributions to *Träume im Mittelalter: ikonologische Studien*, ed. Agostino Paravicini Bagliani and Giorgio Stabile (Stuttgart: Belser-Verlag, 1989); Steven F. Kruger, *Dreaming in the Middle Ages*. Cambridge Studies in Medieval Literature, 14 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992); Albrecht Classen, "Die narrative Funktion des Traumes in mittelhochdeutscher Literatur," *Mediaevistik* 5 (1992): 11–37; id., "Transpositions of Dreams to Reality in Middle High German Narratives," *Shifts and Transpositions in Medieval Narratives. A Festschrift for Dr. Elspeth Kennedy*, ed. by Karen Pratt (Woodbridge, Suffolk: D. S. Brewer, 1994), 109–20; *Dreams and Visions: An Interdisciplinary Enquiry*, ed. Nancy Van Deusen. Presenting the Past, 2 (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2010); Jesse Keskiaho, *Dreams and Visions in the Early Middle Ages: The Reception and Use of Patristic Ideas, 400–900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2015); Benjamin van Well, *Mir troumt hinaht ein troum: Untersuchungen zur Erzählweise von Träumen in mittelhochdeutscher Epik*. Schriften der Wiener Germanistik, 4 (Göttingen: V&R unipress; Vienna: Vienna University Press, 2016); Albrecht Classen, "Dreams in the Middle Ages – Meaningful Experiences from the Past for Our Future?," *Living Pulpit*, Dec. 1, 2018, online at <http://www.pulpit.org/2018/12/dreams-meaningful-experiences-from-the-past-for-our-future/> (last accessed on Feb. 18, 2020).

**254** Elizabeth D. Kirk, *The Dream Thought of Piers Plowman*. Yales Studie in English, 178 (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1972); Rebecca Davis, *Piers Plowman and the Books of Nature* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2016); Daniel F. Pigg, "William Langland's Attitude Toward Play, Leisure, and Pastime: A Realignment of Priorities in Post-Plague England," *Pleasure and Leisure in the Middle Ages and Early Modern Age* (2019; see note 64), 433–50.

the modern age.<sup>255</sup> When people go on travels, for instance, they carry with them almost as much of images of where they are going to or where they are coming from as their actual luggage or actual understanding.<sup>256</sup> Preconceived notions often replace concrete aspects as observed by eye-witnesses. Imagination tends to trump empiricism, and xenophobia thrives on hostile images of the others – a foundational insight pertaining to racism, anti-Semitism, anti-Islam, and anti-Christianity, etc.<sup>257</sup> Xenology, hence, proves to be a most fertile field within cultural history because it aims at exposing the countless images projected upon the other in all communities, among people across the world, and throughout time.<sup>258</sup>

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**255** Marie-Claire Beaulieux, *The Sea in the Greek Imagination* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016).

**256** *Der Prozeß der Imagination: Magie und Empirie in der spanischen Literatur der frühen Neuzeit*, ed. Gerhard Penzkofer. Beihefte zur Iberoromania, 21 (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer, 2005); *Phantasmen: Imagination in Psychologie und Literatur 1840–1930. Flaubert – Čechov – Musil*, ed. Sandra Janßen (Göttingen: Wallstein-Verlag, 2013); Peter Gendolla, *Die Erfindung Italiens: Reiseerfahrung und Imagination* (Paderborn: Wilhelm Fink, 2014); see also Karolina Rapp, *Das Orientbild in der deutschsprachigen Reiseliteratur des 20. und 21. Jahrhunderts: zwischen Realität und Imagination. Kultur – Literatur – Medien* (Frankfurt a. M., Bern, and Vienna: Peter Lang, 2016). The critical literature on this broad topic is too large to be reviewed or even listed here. We can be certain, however, that the issue of imagination within the literary discourse matters centrally in the current research debate.

**257** *Imagining the Self, Imagining the Other: Visual Representation and Jewish-Christian Dynamics in the Middle Ages and Early Modern Period*, ed. Eva Frojmovic. Cultures, Beliefs and Traditions, 15 (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2002); John Victor Tolan, *Saracens: Islam in the Medieval Imagination* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002); Alexandra Cuffel, *Gendering Disgust in Medieval Religious Polemic* (Notre Dame, IN: Indiana University of Notre Dame Press, 2007); *Religion, Gender, and Culture in the Pre-Modern World*, ed. Alexandra Cuffel and Brian Britt. Religion, Culture, Critique (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007); *Re-Imagining the Other: Culture, Media, and Western-Muslim Intersections*, ed. Mahmoud Eid and Karim H. Karim (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014); Sophia Rose Arjana, *Muslims in the Western Imagination: Wicked Skin: Muslim Monsters in the Western Imagination* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015); see also the contributions to *East Meets West in the Middle Ages and Early Modern Times: Transcultural Experiences in the Premodern World*, ed. Albrecht Classen. Fundamentals of Medieval and Early Modern Culture, 14 (Berlin and Boston: Walter de Gruyter, 2013).

**258** *Meeting the Foreign in the Middle Ages*, ed. Albrecht Classen (see note 197). This topic has universal significance, both for Medieval Studies and for the exploration of modern cultures; see the contributions to *Engaging Transculturality: Concepts, Key Terms, Case Studies*, authored by Laila Abu-Er-Rub, Christiane Brosius, et al. (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2018). See also Elka Weber, *Traveling Through Text: Message and Method in late Medieval Pilgrimage Accounts* (New York: Routledge, 2005); *Encounters with Islam in German Literature and Culture*, ed.

Myth-making concerning the foreign world has been similarly at work throughout the centuries, creating an imaginary reality which has often been taken as factual, whereas the opposite is mostly the case. For instance, many modern ideas about the Middle Ages as a dirty, unhealthy, morbid, exclusively religious, or war-prone world in which basic sciences, medicine, technology, or geographical knowledge were absent – see the myth of the chastity belt, the myth of the allegedly flat earth, or the myth of the complete control of the Catholic Church over the entire European population – are simply erroneous and wrong, and yet they deeply occupy modern people's minds.<sup>259</sup>

## The Imaginary World of John Mandeville

Consequently, for instance, John Mandeville's fictitious (or armchair) travelogue about his alleged travel to the Orient was much more successful than Marco Polo's concrete, rather sober, factual, and critical account.<sup>260</sup> The armchair traveler

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Jeffrey Morrison and James R. Hodkinson. *Studies in German Literature, Linguistics, and Culture* (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2009).

**259** Albrecht Classen, *The Medieval Chastity Belt* (see note 202); *Seven Myths of the Crusades*, ed. Alfred J. Andrea and Andrew Holt (Indianapolis, IN, and Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company, 2015); *Alte Helden – neue Zeiten: die Formierung europäischer Identitäten im Spiegel der Rezeption des Mittelalters*, ed. Andrea Schindler, Axel Müller, and Siegrid Schmidt (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2017).

**260** No culture can be imagined without concepts of monsters and a wide variety of deviant creatures that do not fit into the standard epistemological categories. See, for instance, the valuable contributions to *Medieval Folklore: A Guide to Myths, Legends, Tales, Beliefs, and Customs*, ed. Carl Lindahl, John McNamara, and John Lindow (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002); Albrecht Classen, "The Epistemological Function of Monsters in the Middle Ages: From *The Voyage of Saint Brendan* to *Herzog Ernst*, Marie de France, Marco Polo and John Mandeville. What Would We Be Without Monsters in Past and Present!" *Lo Sguardo: Rivista di filologia* 9.2 (2012): 13–34 (<http://www.losguardo.net>: [http://www.losguardo.net/public/archivio/num9/articoli/2012\\_08.%20Albrecht\\_Classen\\_The\\_Epistemological\\_Function\\_of\\_Monsters.pdf](http://www.losguardo.net/public/archivio/num9/articoli/2012_08.%20Albrecht_Classen_The_Epistemological_Function_of_Monsters.pdf); last accessed on Feb. 18, 2020); id., "Marco Polo and John Mandeville: The Traveler as Authority Figure, the Real and the Imaginary," *Authorities in the Middle Ages: Influence, Legitimacy, and Power in Medieval Society*, ed. Sini Kangas, Mia Korpiola, and Tuija Aionen. *Fundamentals of Medieval and Early Modern Culture*, 12 (Berlin and Boston: Walter de Gruyter, 2013), 239–48. See now Christina Henss, *Fremde Räume, Religionen und Rituale in Mandevilles Reisen: Wahrnehmung und Darstellung religiöser und kultureller Alterität in den deutschsprachigen Übersetzungen*. *Quellen und Forschungen zur Literatur- und Kulturgeschichte*, 90 (324) (Berlin and Boston: Walter de Gruyter, 2018); Matthew Boyd Goldie, *Scribes of Space: Place in Middle English Literature and Late Medieval Science* (Ithaca, NY, and London: Cornell University Press, 2019). There is a legion of relevant scholarship on Mandeville.

Mandeville easily superseded the actual traveler Polo as a bestseller author because he addressed, provoked, stimulated, and inspired people's minds with his fantasies. Those he had borrowed from actual travelogues, biblical accounts, monster lore, and sheer fantasy, and this ingenious narrative mix proved to be the perfect recipe for Mandeville's enormous popularity – the public just wanted such exciting literature.<sup>261</sup> Of course, he did not provide reliable, factual information; instead, he reconfirmed general assumptions, elaborated on spurious references to a mythical East, developed those fantasies further, very much in line with those artists, for instance, who created *mappaemundi* (also, *mappae mundi*) and populated those, at least at the margin, with imaginary figures of giants and monsters.<sup>262</sup>

Throughout the Middle Ages, the stunningly creative figures of monsters were ubiquitous since they populate learned treatises, encyclopedias (Isidore of Seville), romances, paintings, and sculptures, with the original images having been derived from antiquity. Visual representations on a two-dimensional map (e.g., *Hereford mappamundi*) and narrative imaginations, such as in *Herzog Ernst* and in travelogues (fictional or not), thus interacted with each other quite productively, which alerts us meaningfully to the imagined concept of this world which world maps and similar cartographic material tends to break down to the material conditions, whereas the imagined concepts really matter centrally.<sup>263</sup> Granted,

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**261** Iain Mac Leod Higgins, *Writing East: The "Travels" of Sir John Mandeville* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1997); Ernst Bremer, *Jean de Mandeville in Europa: neue Perspektiven in der Reiseliteraturforschung*, ed. Ernst Bremer. *Mittelalter-Studien*, 12 (Paderborn and Munich: Wilhelm Fink, 2007); Albrecht Classen, "The Epistemological Function of Monsters in the Middle Ages" (see note 260); id., "Marco Polo and John Mandeville: The Traveler as Authority Figure" (see note 260) 239–48; Karma Lochrie, *Nowhere in the Middle Ages*. The Middle Ages Series (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016); Francis Tobienne, Jr., *Mandeville's Travails: Merging Travel, Theory, and Commentary* (Newark, DE: University of Delaware Press, 2016); Christina Henss, *Fremde Räume, Religionen und Rituale in Mandevilles Reisen: Wahrnehmung und Darstellung religiöser und kultureller Alterität in den deutschsprachigen Übersetzungen*. *Quellen und Forschungen zur Literatur- und Kulturgeschichte*, 90 (324) (Berlin and Boston: Walter de Gruyter, 2018).

**262** Ian M. Higgins, *Writing East* (see note 261).

**263** Julia Weitbrecht, "Heterotope Herrschaftsräume in frühhöfischen Epen und ihre Bearbeitung: König Rother, Herzog Ernst B, D und G," *Literarische Räume der Herkunft: Fallstudien zu einer historischen Narratologie*, ed. Maximilian Benz and Katrin Dennerlein (Berlin and Boston: Walter de Gruyter, 2016), 91–119; Simone Hacke, "Der Reiseweg des Herzog Ernst auf der Ebstorfer Weltkarte," *Zeitschrift für deutsches Altertum und deutsche Literatur* 146.1 (2017): 54–69. See also Marcia Kupfer, *Art and Optics in the Hereford Map: An English Mappa Mundi, c. 1300* (New Haven, CT, and London: Yale University Press, 2016). As she concludes: "medieval works problematize specularly. The Hereford Map invokes the mirror both to signal the map's fidelity and to caution

of course, we are not only dealing with extreme forms of medieval imagination; instead, here we encounter an ancient learned tradition going back at least to Pliny the Elder (23–79 C.E.)’s *Naturalis Historia* (begun in 77 C.E.), who in turn based much of his knowledge on older sources. Nevertheless, many of the images of monsters common in the Middle Ages date back to his work, and through this channel medieval artists and writers could develop their own imaginations, adding varieties and adaptations.<sup>264</sup>

Mandeville thus proved to be a perfect forerunner of those who in the twenty-first century understand perfectly well how to manipulate the modern media and spread rumors and egregious stories about fanciful creatures, such as extraterrestrial beings. It might not do real justice to correlate Mandeville’s *Travels* with contemporary tabloids, reports on and by sensational TV and radio stations, and ideology-driven internet blogs. Nevertheless, in a sense, the imaginary dimension on both sides of the historical equation appears to be truly comparable.

To be sure, Mandeville’s greatest contributions, for which his audiences rewarded him enthusiastically, consisted of the fanciful perception and projection of the foreign worlds and peoples to the East, based on numerous sources from late antiquity (e.g., Ptolemy) and the early and high Middle Ages. In fact, any ‘good,’ that is, effective travel author does not need to travel him/herself, but must have access to a good library, must possess a lively imagination, and a willingness to make up what s/he is lacking in personal experiences that might be distracting for the narrative flow at any rate, and this both in the Middle Ages and today.<sup>265</sup>

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against the deficits of catoptric illusion; the Ebstorf map insists through its play on the trope of reflection that the fullness of truth is deferred ... what matters to the Ruler looking down from heaven is how the faithful soul surveys things not seen” (175).

**264** Alixe Bovey, *Monsters and Grotesques in Medieval Manuscripts* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002); for the grotesque in the early modern time, see Maria Fabricius Hansen, *The Art of Transformation: Grotesques in Sixteenth-Century Italy*. Analecta Romana Instituti Danici.; Supplementum, 49 (Rome: Edizioni Quasar, 2018); for a broader survey, see Alessandra Zamperini, *Ornament and the Grotesque: Fantastical Decoration from Antiquity to Art Nouveau* (London and New York: Thames & Hudson, 2008); cf also the useful webpage with a large number of illustrations by Alixe Bovey, “Medieval Monsters,” 2015, online at: <https://www.bl.uk/the-middle-ages/articles/medieval-monsters-from-the-mystical-to-the-demonic> (last accessed on Feb. 18, 2020).

**265** *Mandevilles Travels*, trans. from the French of Jean d’Outremeuse. Ed. from MS. Cotton Titus C. XVI, in the British Museum by P. Hamelius. Vol. 1: *Text*. Early English Text Society. OS, 153 (London: Paul, Trench, Trübner, 1919); available now online at: <https://quod.lib.umich.edu/cgi/t/text/text-idx?c=cme;idno=aeh6691> (last accessed on Feb. 18, 2020). See now Christina Henss, *Fremde Räume, Religionen und Rituale in Mandevilles Reisen: Wahrnehmung*



Straightforward travelogues tend to report the banal, the trivial, the everyday events and facts, and thus quickly lose the audience's attention. A successful author who wants to relate of his/her travels in a lively and appealing manner must rely on many imaginative elements, on fantasy, on the miraculous, or the monstrous in order to create narrative tension and interest, without necessarily deviating radically from the 'truth'. We might want to go so far as to compare Mandeville with the highly popular modern German writer/author Karl May (1842–1912) who created some of the greatest bestsellers in the history of German literature with his detailed, accurately sounding, often quite realistic adventure and travel novels that take place both in the Middle East and in the western parts of North America. Not only did May read voraciously scores of actual travelogues as sources for his own works, but he also commanded a very creative imagination and thus managed to appeal to countless generations of (young) readers, and this until today.<sup>266</sup>

Similarly, Mandeville regales his audience with most fantastic accounts, whether of the Amazon women (ch. xviii) or pepper produced in an unusual manner (ch. xix), whether of honey and wine growing on trees (ch. xxii) or of monstrous people displaying all kinds of physical shapes and forms (ch. xxiii: "of folk of dyuerse schap and merueylously disfigured"), whether of the mysterious Prester John and a "merueylous castell, and cleped it paradys" (ch. xxxi), or of the hills of gold (ch. xxxiv). Monster lore is as much present here as are religious and political comments, fabulous reports, and factual remarks. The key component always consists of the right mix of fact and fiction, on the proper amount of fantasy or imagination, as it undergirds the realistic dimension.

As we have learned to understand already for a long time, his *Travels* obviously impressed his audience especially because of the intricate and intriguing combination of the ordinary and the extraordinary, the factual and the fanciful. We can identify today many of the sources used by Mandeville, whether Marco Polo or Vincent of Beauvais, Odorico da Pordenone or John of Pian de Carpine, not to forget the ancient authors as the authority figures. This helps us to

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und Darstellung religiöser und kultureller Alterität in den deutschsprachigen Übersetzungen. Quellen und Forschungen zur Literatur- und Kulturgeschichte, 90 (324) (Berlin and Boston: Walter de Gruyter, 2018); Shayne Aaron Legassie, *The Medieval Invention of Travel* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2017); Francis Tobienne, Jr., *Mandeville's Travails: Merging Travel, Theory, and Commentary* (Newark, DE: University of Delaware Press, 2016).

**266** See, for instance, Helmut Schmiedt, *Karl May oder die Macht der Phantasie: eine Biographie* (Munich: C. H. Beck, 2011); see also Heinrich Pleticha and Siegfried Augustin, *Karl May und seine Welt: ein Bildatlas zu Leben und Werk des Schriftstellers* (Braunschweig: Archiv-Verlag, 2005). There are also many good websites dedicated to Karl May.

comprehend the true *bricolage* hidden behind Mandeville's large compilation, but it is not unusual for many other medieval authors to offer such a hybrid text which intended to excite and to teach its audience.<sup>267</sup>

To achieve his goal, however, the author could not simply copy, could not naively try to instruct, as Polo seems to do, but instead had to appeal to the common imagination about the Orient as it had already been outlined by some of his sources, such as Wilhelm von Boldensele.<sup>268</sup> Dragons and snakes, for instance, are a common occurrence universally, though often with different value attached to them.<sup>269</sup> Peraldus's *Theological miscellany* (British Library, Harley MS 3244, ff. 58v–59r), for instance, contains an elaborate red dragon.<sup>270</sup> In Mandeville's *Travels* we read, for instance, "And when he saugh hir comen out of the cve in forme of a dragoun so hidouse & so horrible he hadde so gret drede þat that he fleygh aȝen to the shipp & sche folewed him" (ch. iv, p. 16) (see also Figures 1 and 5).<sup>271</sup>

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**267** For the element of bricolage in late medieval world chronicles, see Albrecht Classen, "Literarische Diskurs-Bricolage als literarische Strategie (Textallianz) in spätmittelalterlicher Chronistik: der Fall von Jans Enikels Weltchronik," *Strukturen und Funktionen in Geschichte und Gegenwart: Festschrift Franz Simmler zum 65. Geburtstag*, ed. Claudia Wich-Reif (Berlin: Weidler, 2007), 425–44. See now Matthew Xavier Vernon, "Gerald in the Middle: Hybridity and Historical Narratives in History and Topography of Ireland and The Conquest of Ireland," *Postmedieval* 8.4 (2016): 1–21. I will engage with Gerald of Wales further below. In this case, Vernon means the bricolage of themes and topics, whereas I am talking about the bricolage of genres and materials.

**268** John Wyatt Greenlee and Anna Fore, "Thinking Globally: Mandeville, Memory, and Mappaemundi," *The Medieval Globe* 4.2 (2017): 404–24.

**269** For global perspectives, see *Dangerous and Divine: The Secret of the Serpent*, ed. Wouter Welling (Amsterdam: KIT Publishers, 2012).

**270** Alixe Bovey, "Medieval Monsters" (2015; see note 264). She also offers plenty of excellent illustrations from medieval manuscripts in the British Library.

**271** Timo Rebschloe, *Der Drache in der mittelalterlichen Literatur Europas*. Beiträge zur älteren Literaturgeschichte (Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag Winter, 2014). Many cultures and peoples are deeply interested in this quasi-mythical creature, both in the West and the East. See now also the contributions to *Drachenblut & Heldenmut*, ed. Stefanie Knöll (Regensburg: Steiner + Schnell, 2019), which are certainly well illustrated and take us from the Middle Ages to the early twentieth century. However, apart from two articles focusing on Middle High German literature, most studies and material focus on the visual presentation of dragons from the sixteenth to the twenty-first century. See my review in *Mediaevistik* (forthcoming). Heroic literature, above all, often contains references to dragons, such as the Old English *Beowulf* (ca. 700), the Latin *Historia Regum Britanniae* by Geoffrey of Monmouth (early eleventh century), the Middle High German *Nibelungenlied* (ca. 1200), or the thirteenth-century Icelandic *Völsunga saga*. In the late medieval "Dietrich epic" (epic poems focusing on the protagonist Dietrich) we come across horrible dragons many times. We do not necessarily require the analytic tools of modern psychoanalysis to comprehend the

Altogether, then, any critical approach to Mandeville's text would have to acknowledge two premises. First, he drew on many different sources and did not really care about authenticating his report because it was really the narrative of an armchair story teller. Second, there is enough realistic data after all to convince the ordinary reader/listener of the concrete, verifiable references. Nevertheless, the fabulous dominates throughout, as research has confirmed in a variety of ways, which makes us appreciate Marco Polo's account much more so, although it might disappoint the common reader/listener whose fantasy is not sufficiently stimulated by him.

We can now take the next step and recognize the essential mechanism that makes the *Travels* work so well. Drawing from a broad range of assumptions, premises, preconceived notions, and expectations, Mandeville employs a subtle but powerful mechanism based on imagination to bring home to his European readers the fanciful world of the Orient, something which both pilgrims and merchants as potential readers/listeners essentially required, apart from a much wider audience simply in need of entertainment. After all, pilgrimage was actually performed both in concrete physical terms, and in proxy, especially by nuns who read the reports and carried out the respective service when

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intricate and meaningful functions of dragons in that literary context, mirroring universal types of imagination and fantasy, whether as archetypes or not (Carl Gustav Jung, Joseph L. Henderson, Sigmund Freud, and even Michel Foucault); cf. Rebschloe, *Der Drache*, 50–54. Insofar as the dragon appears in many different cultures, in East and West, it would deserve to be studied on its own on a global level; for a good overview, which also includes many text excerpts, images, and bibliography, see the rather impressive and informative article by an anonymous, online at: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dragon> (last accessed on Feb. 18, 2020); last edited on June 26, 2019. Cf. now also Martin Arnold, *The Dragon: Fear and Power* (London: Reaktion Books, 2018). It would be much more important, however, to distinguish more clearly between dragons as they appear in early medieval texts (*Beowulf*, ca. 700), dragons in high medieval narratives (Geoffrey of Monmouth, *Historia Regum Britanniae*, early twelfth century), and dragons commented on in the late Middle Ages (*Das Lied vom Hürnen Seyfrid*, perhaps late thirteenth century). The role of dragons in the Old Norse myths and sagas deserves particular attention. For images and excellent comments, along with a good bibliography on this topic at large, see also the German entry on dragons, with a very different set of images and explanations compared to the English version, online at: [https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Drache\\_\(Mythologie\)#Christliches\\_Mittelalter](https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Drache_(Mythologie)#Christliches_Mittelalter) (last accessed on Feb. 18, 2020). See now the introduction to *Das Lied vom Hürnen Seyfrid*, ed. Maike Claußnitzer and Cassandra Sperl. Relectiones, 7 (Stuttgart: S. Hirzel, 2019), XXVI–XXX. For a discussion of Chinese dragons in their symbolic meaning, especially as mirrored in silk weavings and other textiles, which certainly made their way to fourteenth-century Europe as well, see now Kathrin Müller, *Musterhaft naturgetreu: Tiere in Seiden, Zeichnungen und Tapisserien des 14. und 15. Jahrhunderts*. Neue Frankfurter Forschungen zur Kunst, 21 (Berlin: Gebr. Mann Verlag, 2020), 46–54.

the individual locations were reached within the narrative context. They traveled, for sure, to the Holy Land, but only in their mind.<sup>272</sup> Others, who enjoyed Mandeville's account as entertainment, obviously delighted in the intriguing mixture of the adventurous, exotic, and realistic.

From Mandeville's perspective, there was no need at all to verify his personal experiences because he always spoke with the voice of full authority and assumed that his audience would believe every one of his words.<sup>273</sup> Since there were very few options to verify his claims, and since he was overly bold in his comments about the Oriental world, he simply turned into a most successful writer who drew from his imagination and who inspired his audience's imagination.

## Imagination and the Outside World

And of course, that is exactly what every other travelogue author has done throughout time, whether we think of the many medieval Muslim, Jewish, or Christian writers, of merchants as authors, or missionaries, diplomats, scholars, craftsmen, or artists. The foreign world always appears to be scary, fearful, inexplicable, confusing, or simply strange, and yet it was also highly challenging, intriguing, exciting, and promising because the own expectations might find a safe haven there. Imagination operates in this context as a human tool to come to terms with the foreign by itself, either to accept it as such or to respond to it in a constructive manner. Mandeville, above all, was so skillful because he drew extensively from his audience's own world experiences in order to explain the foreign within the imaginary context which was both familiar and unknown at the same time.

Making the fanciful and the miraculous to a matter of epistemological tools for the handling of this world builds most significant bridges between the self

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<sup>272</sup> Kathryn Rudy, "A Guide to Mental Pilgrimage: Paris, Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal Ms. 212," *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte* 63 (2000): 494–515; cf. Albrecht Classen, "Imaginary Experience of the Divine: Felix Fabri's *Sionpilger* – Late-Medieval Pilgrimage Literature as a Window into Religious Mentality," *Studies in Spirituality* 15 (2005): 109–28. See also Gavin Fort, "'Make a Pilgrimage for Me': The Role of Place in Late Medieval Proxy Pilgrimage," *Travel, Time, and Space in the Middle Ages and Early Modern Time: Explorations of Worldly Perceptions and Processes of Identity Formation*, ed. Albrecht Classen. Fundamentals of Medieval and Early Modern Culture, 22 (Berlin and Boston: Walter de Gruyter, 2018), 424–45.

<sup>273</sup> Albrecht Classen, "Marco Polo and John Mandeville" (see note 260); Matthew Boyd Goldie, *Scribes of Space: Place in Middle English Literature and Late Medieval Science* (Ithaca, NY, and London: Cornell University Press, 2019).

and the other. Dreaming or imagination thus emerges as essential tools in the effort to expose the hidden historical and narratological components in the text or art work. As I have mentioned above already, the focus on imagination thus builds both on the history of mentality and the history of emotions in order to reach a new level in our critical analysis of pre-modern culture, drawing also from the field of imagology, which has, however, been rather neglected in the last years (see below).

A soldier today, for instance, who has committed multiple crimes by way of killing an entire village population, such as in My Lai in Vietnam on March 16, 1968, would face serious difficulties in identifying what is right or wrong because once having killed innocent people, life and death have become matters of negotiations; and imagination then takes over reality. In this case we are talking about PTSD, which in essence means that the individual suffers from a mind-changing experience and cannot easily switch back from his world of fighting at all costs to a civilized life where everyone is supposed to treat others with respect, according to the laws in the respective country.

The situation of the Nibelungs in the eponymous epic poem during the final battle at Etzel's court in which they all go berserk at the end might serve as a dramatic medieval example for this phenomenon, as different as this epic poem certainly is, apart from the fact that the Middle High German epic poem was written around 1200, while the event in My Lai took place during America's terrible and decades-long military involvement in Indochina. Killing, either as a soldier or as a medieval hero, has deep-reaching consequences for the mind, which means that we can draw significant connections between medieval literary documents and their reflections on imagination and mental concepts and modern conditions involving soldiers who have gone through parallel experiences. At least, we can ask very similar questions and then compare the answers which might be productive for the analysis of the phenomenon in the respective case.

## **Gerald of Wales: Anthropological Fantasies**

Although it might be difficult to trace the lines of influence from the far end of western medieval Europe to the Continent, it behooves us here to comment also on Gerald of Wales's travelogues about the monstrous, i.e., hybrid people in Ireland as a further testimony of the great significance of imagination for pre-modern culture, often predicated on sexual fantasies, fear, or religious

confusion.<sup>274</sup> Also known as Giraldus Cambrensis, this Cambro-Norman arch-deacon of Brecon (1164–1223), serving as chaplain to the British King Henry II (since 1184) and two archbishops, traveled widely, especially to Ireland and Wales (here putting aside his trips to Rome and Paris, for instance) and left us highly remarkable accounts that teem with references to monsters and hybrid creatures. Those appear in his *Topographia Hibernica* (ca. 1220) and especially in his *Expugnatio Hibernica*.

While Adam of Bremen (before 1050–1181/85) and his continuator Helmold (ca. 1120–after 1177) almost simultaneously focused on the Baltic people (*Gesta Hammaburgensis ecclesiae pontificum*), and while Otto of Freising (ca. 1114–1158) offered a description of the Magyar people in his *Gesta Frederici*, Gerald turned his ethnographic gaze toward the very western parts of Europe (Ireland) and had to make a major effort in this enterprise because he could hardly rely on any classical Roman sources or other learned treatises since he dealt, at least for a scholar-author, with a new territory and new people.<sup>275</sup> To a large extent, Gerald offers surprisingly objective comments, reporting in a highly factual manner about the geography, fauna, flora, climate, and culture, but then he also allows his fantasy free reign.

To do justice to Gerald's scholarly strategies and purposes, which have been identified by some as "colonial ethnography,"<sup>276</sup> would require an extensive

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**274** Michael A. Faletra, *Wales and the Medieval Colonial Imagination: The Matters of Britain in the Twelfth Century*. The New Middle Ages (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014). Gerald of Wales, *Expugnatio Hibernica*, ed. and trans. A. B. Scott and F. X. Martin (Dublin: Royal Irish Academy, 1978); id., *The History and Topography of Ireland*, trans. John O'Meara (New York: Penguin, 1982); id., *The Journey Through Wales and the Description of Wales*, trans. Lewis Thorpe (New York: Penguin, 1978). For an easily accessible online text version, see *The Historical Works of Giraldus Cambrensis: Containing the Topography of Ireland, and the History of the Conquest of Ireland: The Itinerary Through Wales, and the Description of Wales*, rev. ed. by Thomas Wright (1863; London: George Bell, 1905; New York: AMS Press, 1968); online available in various formats, but only the PDF correctly reproduces the text by Wright: <https://ia600301.us.archive.org/5/items/historicalworkso00girauoft/historicalworkso00girauoft.pdf> (last accessed on Feb. 18, 2020).

**275** Shirin A. Khanmohamadi, *In Light of Another's Word: European Ethnography in the Middle Ages*. The Middle Ages Series (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014), 37–40; see also Michael Staunton, *The Historians of Angevin England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017); and the contributions to *Gerald of Wales: New Perspectives on a Medieval Writer and Critic*, ed. A. Joseph McMullen and Georgia Henley (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2018). See also the contribution to this volume by Scott L. Taylor.

**276** Khanmohamadi, *In Light of Another's Word* (see note 275), 43. The *Descriptio Kambrae* was clearly directed toward an Anglo-Norman audience, giving specific advice of how the

discussion for which there is no room here. Instead, suffices it for us to pay attention to his imaginary perspectives of the often monstrous people in Ireland, whom Gerald actually views with considerable ambiguity and almost with mixed feelings, rejecting the crude, often almost monstrous customs and phenomena there, and embracing his home country at the same time as his identificatory base where weather is pleasant and nature is inviting.<sup>277</sup> This author made his own choices very clear and did not harbor any self-doubts as to the glory of the Welsh and the despicable nature of the Irish. He was, we might say, a colonialist *avant la lettre*, certainly determined by his religious and imperial perspectives, at least considering his imaginary concepts of the people on the other side of the Irish Sea.

But there is more to this writer. When discussing Wales, for instance, he also relates of many different types of more or less mythological beasts, such as the weasel, apparently trying to apply the results of his previous study of the *Physiologus* (2nd c. C.E.), a standard textbook, for instance, to the new land of Wales, presenting this animal as having feelings, intelligence, and rationality.<sup>278</sup> However, when the topic pertained to Ireland, Gerald reviews the many kinds of monstrous people there, often the outcome of a man's sexual intercourse with a cow, or other forms of mingling of animals with humans (bestiality). He calls those creatures that appear to be half animal and half human as "eccentricities" of nature, but he pleads with his audience to be tolerant and to accept them amidst themselves because they stand on their own feet, laugh, and display other human characteristics. Over and over again, Gerald explores further cases of bestiality, and he strongly opines that animals were given to humans as servants, or to be used, but not to be abused (Distinction II, ch. XXIV).

The author regales the audience with many kinds of wondrous accounts about the offsprings of sexual intercourse between humans and animals, a phenomenon entirely viewed as sinful and abominable to faithful Christians, but he does not allude to them out of personal delight or disgust, but because he

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Welsh could be defeated so the military leader would understand the characteristics and culture of the Welsh well enough.

<sup>277</sup> Michael Richter, *Giraldus Cambrensis: The Growth of the Welsh Nation/Normannen und Waliser bei Giraldus Cambrensis* (Aberystwyth: National Library of Wales, 1972), 69; Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, *Hybridity, Identity and Monstrosity in Medieval Britain: On Difficult Middles*. The New Middle Ages (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 77–108. See also the contributions to *Writing History in the Anglo-Norman World: Manuscripts, Makers and Readers, c. 1066-c. 1250*, ed. Laura Cleaver and Andrea Worm. Writing History in the Middle Ages, 6 (Rochester, NY: York Medieval Press; Woodbridge, Suffolk: Boydell and Brewer, 2018).

<sup>278</sup> Gerald of Wales, *The Journey Through Wales and The Description of Wales* (see note 274), 149–50.

wants to offer an ‘accurate’ report about Ireland where similar ‘wonders’ can be found as in the East. His imagination was obviously framed by his learning, and so he drew from deeply anchored types of fantasies and scholarly concepts in order to project a rather fanciful mental landscape of those western lands. Apart from the horrendous monstrosities that occur there, he also has a bit to say about the miracles brought about by the various saints (Distinction II, ch. XXVIII, XXXIV, etc.), some of whom display, as the author also has to say, a rather uncontrolled temper (Distinction II, ch. LV).

Altogether, then, the *Topographia Hibernica* (ca. 1220) and especially his *Expugnatio Hibernica* proves to be an extraordinary treasure trove of medieval fantasy and imagination, combined with much historiographical expertise, religious comments, and anthropological and ethnographic curiosity. To be sure, we cannot properly gauge this work if we ignore or dismiss the poetic license, or the inventiveness with which Gerald introduces his own home country, the barbaric cultures which he rejects outright, without being able to describe that land entirely in prejudicious and stereotypical terms.<sup>279</sup> Fact and fiction intricately weave into each other, and we face a hard time distinguishing clearly between Gerald’s imaginations and concrete data that we could trust.

Even though it would be impossible to establish direct lines of contact, here disregarding the fact that we are dealing with the same learned context during the same time period, it certainly deserves to be mentioned that Gerald addressed quite similar concepts about monstrosity as the anonymous Middle High German author of the *Lucidarius* (see above), who in turn had drawn extensively from his own Latin sources. The medieval imagination of monsters was obviously shared across languages, genres, and periods.

## Imaginary Travels in Other Narratives

Some of the best examples from the Middle Ages pertaining to the fundamental travel experience were the highly popular legendary accounts of the Irish monk St. Brendan (going west – also reported about by Gerald of Wales), the

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<sup>279</sup> It seems somewhat questionable to talk here of a “perceived threat of cultural loss of traditional Welsh byways,” as Khanmohamadi, *In Light of Another’s Word* (see note 275), 39, has it. She goes, however, so far as to claim that “Gerald was enacting an early form of ‘salvage anthropology,’ the salvaging of native materials against the losses born of colonial incursion” (39). Perhaps, however, the use of the term ‘autoethnography’ (Mary Louise Pratt) might represent a good bridge to the much larger issue of Gerald’s attempt to give free reign to his own imagination about the old Wales.



enormously successful Latin text of *Apollonius of Tyre* (traveling in the eastern Mediterranean), which was translated into virtually all major European languages,<sup>280</sup> the anonymous *Herzog Ernst* (see below), or Guillaume de Deguileville (ca. 1295–1358)’s *Le Pèlerinage de vie humaine* (ca. 1331, rev. ca. 1355; *The Pilgrimage of Human Life*).<sup>281</sup> While the latter was a most popular spiritual travel account, as demonstrated by the hundreds of manuscript copies, the former three texts constituted some of the most popular travel narratives of their time especially because here the protagonist ventures into various new geophysical spaces, either in the fabulous west or the fabulous east, although the authors do not always talk about monstrous creatures.<sup>282</sup>

Although there seem to be considerable differences between the various genres (religious vs. secular narrative), they all share the fundamental element that makes their accounts even possible in the first place: imagination. We could hence add here also *mappaemundi*, world chronicles, and literary texts that involve travel (Boccaccio, *Decameron*, Chaucer, *Canterbury Tales*, Marguerite de Navarre, *Heptaméron*, Georg Wickram, *Rollwagenbüchlein*), and we would then discover that they all operate with a certain degree of imagination and fantasy in order to embellish, expand, or enliven their reports that often include narrative material that is deliberately unrealistic and thrives on magic, or fancy.<sup>283</sup>

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**280** Tina Terrahe, *Heinrich Steinhöwels Apollonius: Edition und Studien*. Frühe Neuzeit, 179 (Berlin und Boston: Walter de Gruyter, 2013); see also Albrecht Classen, “Die Freude am Exotischen als literarisches Phänomen des Spätmittelalters. Heinrichs von Neustadt *Apollonius von Tyrland*,” *Wirkendes Wort* 54.1 (2004): 23–46. For the edition of a fourteenth-century version, see *Historia Apollonii regis Tyri: A Fourteenth-Century Version of a Late Antique Romance*. Ed. from Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, MS Vaticanus Latinus 1961, by William Robins. Toronto Medieval Latin Texts, 36 (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 2019).

**281** Albrecht Classen, “Time, Space, and Travel in the Pre-Modern World: Theoretical and Historical Reflections. An Introduction,” *Travel, Time, and Space in the Middle Ages and Early Modern Time: Explorations of Worldly Perceptions and Processes of Identity Formation*, ed. id. Fundamentals of Medieval and Early Modern Culture, 22 (Berlin and Boston: Walter de Gruyter, 2018), 1–75.

**282** See now the contributions to *Aventiure und Eskapade: Narrative des Abenteuerlichen vom Mittelalter zur Moderne*, ed. Jutta Eming and Ralf Schlechtweg-Jahn. Transatlantische Studien zu Mittelalter und Früher Neuzeit, 7 (Göttingen: V&R unipress, 2017). See also *Drachenlandung: ein Hildesheimer Drachen-Aquamanile des 12. Jahrhunderts*, ed. Claudia Höhl, Gerhard Lutz, and Joanna Olchawa. Objekte und Eliten in Hildesheim 1130 bis 1250, 1; Patrimonia, 382 (Regensburg: Schnell + Steiner; Hildesheim: bernward.Medien, 2017).

**283** *Remapping Travel Narratives (1000–1700): To the East and Back Again*, ed. Montserrat Piera. Connected Histories in the Early Modern World (Leeds: ARC Humanities Press, 2018); Martin Jacobs, *Reorienting the East: Jewish Travelers to the Medieval Muslim World*. Jewish Culture and Contexts (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014); see also the contributions to *Medieval Ethnographies: European Perceptions of the World Beyond*, ed. Joan-Pau

Thus, in essence, as we can conclude preliminarily, especially literary texts and visual objects serve exceedingly well as keys into the world of imagination because the authors or artists have always enjoyed a certain degree of freedom and yet reflected on general assumptions, expectations, values, and ideals making up the collective mind-set.

## The Anonymous *Herzog Ernst*

Let us focus next on a highly popular Middle High German verse narrative, *Herzog Ernst* (Duke Ernst, ms. A ca. 1170/80, ms. B ca. 1220), which consists of specific historical references and much fantasy. It seems as if the latter components have always appeared to be much more popular and meaningful for many audiences throughout time if we consider the great emphasis on the theme of monstrosity.<sup>284</sup> As relevant and important as the early part of this *Spielmannsepos* (Goliardic narrative) must have been for the individual reader/listener because of the specific historical account about the warfare between the Bavarian Duke Ernst and the Emperor Otto,<sup>285</sup> the protagonist's encounters

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Rubiés. The Expansion of Latin Europe, 9 (Farnham, Surrey, and Burlington, VT: Ashgate Variorum, 2009). The number of relevant studies on travel in the Middle Ages is legion, which underscores the great significance of this topic, and this also for our topic, imagination and fantasy.

**284** *Herzog Ernst: ein mittelalterliches Abenteuerbuch*. In der mhd. Fassung B nach der Ausgabe von K. Bartsch mit den Bruchstücken der Fassung A, ed., trans., and commentary by Bernhard Sowinski (1970; Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam jun., 2009). This work has now been re-edited, also on the basis of ms. B, but together with the fragments of the versions A, B, and Kl, ed., trans., and commentary by Mathias Herweg (Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam jun., 2019); for a comprehensive and critical introduction, see Hans Szklenar and Hans-Joachim Behr, "Herzog Ernst," *Die deutsche Literatur des Mittelalters: Verfasserlexikon*. 2nd completely rev. ed. by Kurt Ruh et al. (Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1981), coll. 1170–91. For a recent and extensive bibliography, see Volker Zaph, "Herzog Ernst," *Deutsches Literatur-Lexikon: Das Mittelalter*, ed. Wolfgang Achnitz. Vol. 5 (Berlin and Bonn: Walter de Gruyter, 2013), 149–65. There is, however, not much new, only an updated bibliography. For a successful reading of this text through a psychological lens, see David Blamires, *Herzog Ernst and the Otherworld Voyage* (see note 189); Sophie Marshall, "Queering and Things: Vectors of Desire in *Herzog Ernst B*," *Deutsche Vierteljahrsschrift für Literaturwissenschaft und Geistesgeschichte* 92.3 (2018): 287–316.

**285** Otto Neudeck, *Erzählen von Kaiser Otto: zur Fiktionalisierung von Geschichte in mittelhochdeutscher Literatur*. Norm und Struktur, 18 (Cologne, Weimar, and Vienna: Böhlau, 2003). The title of the 1557 print reveals how much the hybridization of fact and fiction in this narrative continued to appeal to the public: *Ein gar lustige // History von Hertzog Ernst// in Beyern vnd*

with monsters in the East were certainly much more appealing, which continues to be the case until today because the exotic elements catapult the individual out of his/her banal or trivial existence and allow him/her to imagine alternative worlds somewhere in the fictional East, maybe a case of medieval Orientalism *avant la lettre*. Of course, we can only guess how the contemporary audience actually responded to the various parts of this verse narrative, but the historical section, so to speak, simply mirrors past events in Germany within a more literary context. Once Ernst travels to the East, however, the real challenges begin and the audience's fantasy is truly inspired through the fabulous accounts. Many times Duke Ernst is close to death, but his intelligence, strength, endurance, but also his pure luck help him to survive ever new challenges.<sup>286</sup> His adventures with crane people, griffins, giants, monsters, and other beings are simply astounding, but they all confirm his extraordinary heroic qualities and his excellent leadership.

Not surprisingly, Ernst manages to overcome all of the dangers and to triumph over all of his opponents, which thus allows him to return home to Germany where he eventually succeeds even to appease the emperor and to strike a new friendship with him. He hands over to Otto some of the exotic creatures (monsters) whom he had collected as a kind of souvenirs, which builds, narratively, further bridges between the factual and the fictional insofar as it was not uncommon for medieval kings to establish a curiosity cabinet or a sort of zoo of unusual animals, a menagerie, such as at William the Conqueror's Woodstock menagerie, King John's Tower of London menagerie, or Emperor Frederick II's menageries at Melfi in Basilicata, at Lucera in Apulia, and at

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*Oesterreich/ wie er // durch wunderbarlichen vnfall sich inn ge=||fährliche Rheisen begab/ darauf er mit etlich wenig sei=||nes Volcks wider erlediget/ vnnd gnad vonn Keiser Otten erlangt/ der jhm nach // dem Leben gestalt hat ... //* (Frankfurt a. M.: Weigand Han, 1557; rpt. Berlin: Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, Universitätsbibliothek, 2016). For recent observations on the narrative strategies, see now the contributions to *Brüchige Helden – brüchiges Erzählen: mittelhochdeutsche Heldenepik aus narratologischer Sicht*, ed. Anne-Katrin Federow, Kay Malcher, and Marina Münkler. Texte und Studien zur mittelhochdeutschen Heldenepik, 11 (Berlin and Boston: Walter de Gruyter, 2017).

**286** Andrea Moltzen, *Curiositas: Studien zu "Alexander", "Herzog Ernst", "Brandan", "Fortunatus", "Historia von D. Johann Fausten" und "Wagnerbuch"* (Hamburg: Verlag Dr. Kovač, 2016); Albrecht Classen, "The Dream City in Medieval Literature: The Case of *Herzog Ernst* (ca. 1170/ca. 1220), Konrad von Würzburg's *Partonopier und Meliur* (ca. 1280), and Marco Polo's *Le Devisement du monde* (ca. 1310)," *Studia Neophilologica* 91.3 (2019): 336–54. See also the contribution to this volume by Filip Hrbek who engages with the Cze-language versions of this text and other narratives.

Palermo in Sicily.<sup>287</sup> The presence of those non-European animals explains to a large extent their presence in medieval manuscript illuminations, stone sculptures (gargoyles, capitals, corbels, etc.),<sup>288</sup> although we cannot ignore the significant influence of the biblical tradition and the impact of encyclopedic literature, such as by Isidore of Seville's (ca. 560–636) *Etymologiae*.

The efforts to establish solid and comprehensive knowledge regularly intertwined with deeply embedded strategies to illustrate the 'facts' by means of allegory, symbolism, metaphors, or icons of all sorts. Of course, the didactic intentions cannot be overlooked, and it is quite clear that the mass of those horrifying and shocking images in stone served specifically theological purposes (most impressive, for instance, see the purely Romanesque church San Martín de Tours in Frómista, located on the pilgrimage route to Santiago de Compostela, north of Valladolid, or north of Palencia). Nevertheless, particularly the deeply dramatic features in stone were the result of most lively imagination which the patrons channeled for their own purposes to warn about and alert the pious travelers.<sup>289</sup>

What centrally matters to us here consists of the fundamental purpose of and intention with the fictional discourse, or literature, which has hardly ever been simply the result of imagination, but has commonly emerged as a unique

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**287** Robert J. Hoage, Anne Roskell, and Jane Mansour, "Menageries and Zoos to 1900," *New World, New Animals: From Menagerie to Zoological Park in the Nineteenth Century*, ed. Robert J. Hoage and William A. Deiss (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, 1996), 8–18; Eric Baratay and Elisabeth Hardouin-Fugier, *Zoo: A History of Zoological Gardens in the West* (London: Reaktion Books, 2002); Thijs Demeulemeester, *Wunderkammer: An Exotic Journey Through Time* (Tielt: Lanoo, 2017); see also the contributions to *The Routledge Companion to Animal-Human History*, ed. Hilda Kean and Philip Howell (London and New York: Routledge, 2019); Eric Baratay and Elisabeth Hardouin-Fugier, *Zoo: A History of the Zoological Gardens of the West* (London: Reaktion, 2002); Daniel Hahn, *The Tower Menagerie* (London: Simon & Schuster, 2003). For a list of the major relevant menageries owned by medieval kings, see <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Menagerie> (last accessed on Feb. 18, 2020); here also with a useful bibliography. The most relevant study, however, proves to be Janetta Rebold Benton, *The Medieval Menagerie: Animals in the Art of the Middle Ages* (New York: Abbeville Press, 1992).

**288** Janetta R. Benton, *The Medieval Menagerie: Animals in the Art of the Middle Ages* (New York: Abbeville Press, 1992); see also the contributions to *Animals in Human Histories: The Mirror of Nature and Culture*, ed. Mary J. Henninger-Voss. Studies in Comparative History, 1 (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 2002).

**289** Jesús Herrero Marcos and Carlos Arroyo Puertas, *Arquitectura y simbolismo de San Martín de Frómista*. 2nd ed. (Madrid: Ars magna, 1995); Ricardo Puente, *La Iglesia Románica de San Martín de Frómista* (León: Ed. Albanega, 2002); Stefan Trinks, *Antike und Avantgarde: Skulptur am Jakobsweg im 11. Jahrhundert: Jaca – León – Santiago* (Berlin: Oldenbourg Wissenschaftsverlag, 2012).

and powerful medium to explore deeper levels of meanings, whether moral, tropological, allegorical, or even anagogical.<sup>290</sup> While previous scholars such as Walter Haug and Dennis H. Green emphasized the emergence of fictionality since the twelfth century, connecting our modern concept of literature with or approximating it to the world of medieval literature,<sup>291</sup> here the emphasis rests on the essential goal aimed for by medieval and early modern poets, especially when they employ fanciful themes, motifs, objects, creatures, or subject matters. As the editors of the volume *Literature as Thought Experiment* (2019) now observe,

Many people share the intuition that by turning to works of literature something can be learned about the world. One way to explain the epistemic access to the world that fictional literature provides is by comparing it to thought experiments. Both – thought experiments and works of fiction – might be seen as imaginative exercises which help to find out what would or could happen if certain conditions were met. This comparison of fictional literature with thought experiments provides the point of departure for the contributions in our volume. It contributes to the discussion of an approach that has quite recently entered the field of the philosophy of literature.<sup>292</sup>

However, we ought to widen this perspective as well and emphasize that the imaginary and fictional elements in the literary discourse shed important light on crucial aspects in human spirituality, mentality, and everyday culture. Everyone has ideas, dreams, aspirations, and concepts about how the world

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**290** Klaus Vogelsang, “Allegorie, Allegorese, vierfacher Schriftsinn,” *Theorien der Literatur*, ed. Hans Vilmar Geppert. Vol. 3 (Tübingen: Francke), 171–89. The fundamental insights into this four-fold interpretive model were developed by Henri de Lubac, *Typologie, Allegorie, geistiger Sinn: Studien zur Geschichte der christlichen Schriftauslegung*, trans. Rudolf Voderholzer. *Theologia romanica*, 23 (1959–1965; Einsiedeln, Switzerland; Freiburg I. Br.: Johannes, 1999).

**291** Walter Haug, *Die Wahrheit der Fiktion: Studien zur weltlichen und geistlichen Literatur des Mittelalters und der frühen Neuzeit* (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer, 2003); see also his previous monograph, the seminal study on the theory of literature in the Middle Ages, *Literaturtheorie im deutschen Mittelalter: von den Anfängen bis zum Ende des 13. Jahrhunderts* 2nd rev. and expanded ed. (1985; Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1992); Dennis H. Green, *The Beginnings of Medieval Romance: Fact and Fiction, 1150–1220* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002); see now the contributions to *Medieval Narratives Between History and Fiction from the Centre to the Periphery of Europe, c. 1100–1400*, ed. Panagiôtēs Agapetos and Lars Boje Mortensen, Lars Boje (Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum Press, 2012).

**292** Quote is taken from the online advertisement for this volume, *Literature as Thought Experiment? Perspectives from Philosophy and Literary Studies*, ed. Falk Bornmüller, Johannes Franzen, and Mathis (Paderborn: Wilhelm Fink, 2019). This summary is available at <https://www.fink.de/katalog/titel/978-3-7705-6429-3.html> (last accessed on Feb. 18, 2020). The contributors approach their topic exclusively from a modern perspective, but the conclusions specifically address our concerns with pre-modern literature.

should be or might be, and the options to imagine an alternative one are simply infinite. To restate our fundamental concern with this volume once again, the imaginary and fictional dimensions of medieval and early modern literature add to and profoundly reflect on human existence, both in the past and in the present.<sup>293</sup>

Hence, *Herzog Ernst*, like many other contemporary works, operates both with historical and literary elements, draws from many different reservoirs of medieval fantasy, especially pertaining to the Orient and the world of monsters,<sup>294</sup>

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**293** For perspectives toward early modern literature, see Manuel Mühlbacher, *Die Kraft der Figuren: Darstellungsformen der Imagination bei Shaftesbury, Condillac und Diderot*. Periploous Münchener Studien zur Literaturwissenschaft (Paderborn: Wilhelm Fink, 2019). The book deals with the following points (taken from the online summary): “Die Imagination ist eine omnipräsente Kraft, die im Prozess des Schreibens und Lesens wirkt. Genau deshalb kann sie niemals Gegenstand einer reinen Theorie sein. Jeder Text über die Imagination setzt diese bereits ins Werk und ist daher performativ. Manuel Mühlbacher nimmt diese Beobachtung als Ausgangspunkt, um die Geschichte der Imagination zwischen Rationalismus und Romantik neu zu erzählen. Im 18. Jahrhundert prägt sich ein Bewusstsein dafür aus, dass die Kraft der Imagination letztlich unentrinnbar ist – dass man ihr immer schon unterliegt, während man über sie reflektiert. Bei Shaftesbury, Condillac und Diderot, die im Zentrum der Untersuchung stehen, wird diese Einsicht programmatisch: Ihre Schreibverfahren führen vor, dass es keinen rationalen Standpunkt außerhalb der Imagination geben kann. Nimmt man die Dimension der imaginativen Kraft ernst, so gilt das Augenmerk der Lektüre nicht mehr begriffsgeschichtlichen Entwicklungen, sondern den rhetorischen und literarischen Darstellungsformen, in denen sich die Imagination manifestiert.” Online at: <https://www.fink.de/katalog/titel/978-3-7705-6412-5.html> (last accessed on Feb. 18, 2020). In my translation: The imagination is an omnipresent force that works in the process of writing and reading. That is exactly the reason why it can never be the object of an abstract theory. Every text dealing with imagination already enacts this and is thus performative. Manuel Mühlbacher takes this observation as the starting point in order to retell the history of imagination between rationalism and romanticism once again. In the eighteenth century, a new awareness grows that the power of imagination is ultimately irresistible; you always become its object, why people reflect upon it. In the case of Shaftesbury, Condillac, and Diderot, who make up the bulk of this investigation, this concept becomes programmatic: Their way of writing illustrates that there is no rational standpoint outside of imagination. If you take the dimension of the imaginative force seriously, then the focus of the reading process is no longer on the history of concepts as they developed, but on the rhetorical and literary forms of representation in which imagination manifests itself.

**294** Yücel Sivri, *Mitteldeutsche Orientliteratur des 12. und 13. Jahrhunderts: “Graf Rudolf” und “Herzog Ernst”: ein Beitrag zu interkulturellen Auseinandersetzungen im Hochmittelalter*. Kultur, Wissenschaft, Literatur, 28 (Frankfurt a. M., Bern, Brussels, et al.: Peter Lang, 2016); see also the contributions to *The Ashgate Research Companion to Monsters and the Monstrous*, ed. Asa Simon Mittman and Peter Dendle (London: Routledge, 2017); Sherry Lindquist and Asa Simon Mittman, *Medieval Monsters: Terrors, Aliens, Wonders* (New York: The Morgan Library & Museum, 2018). They also argue that in the Middle Ages monstrosity was also applied to outsiders, minority groups, and hated individuals. See also the contributions to *Geography and Ethnography: Perceptions of the World in Pre-Modern Societies*, ed. Richard J. A. Talbot and Kurt A. Raaflaub.

and thus successfully established itself as a major source of entertainment for both the secular, non-Latinate (Middle High German) and later also the learned, Latinate audiences. Within the fictional framework concrete, truly important reflections on political, ritualistic, performative, and military enter the picture.<sup>295</sup> A literary text such as *Herzog Ernst* contains many avenues for the various readers, appealing both to their historical or political interests and to their fantasies.<sup>296</sup> Its great popularity results, without any doubt, from the intricate and highly skillful combination of realistic (political struggle, crusade) and fanciful elements (world of monsters).

## Marie de France's *Lais*

Another, virtually contemporary example, would be the *lais* by Marie de France who drew deliberately not from ancient Latin sources, but relied on her knowledge of old Breton tales as she had heard them performed orally, or read them, as she states specifically, in conformity and parallel with the usual authentication topos, in chronicles reporting about events that had happened in the past: “Aint al tens ancīnur.”<sup>297</sup> Even though Marie insists on the veracity of her

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The Ancient World—Comparative Histories (Chichester, UK: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010); Sanjay Subrahmanyam, *Empires Between Islam and Christianity, 1500–1800*. SUNY Series in Hindu Studies (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2019).

**295** Corinna Dörich, *Poetik des Rituals: Konstruktion und Funktion politischen Handelns in mittelalterlicher Literatur*. Symbolische Kommunikation in der Vormoderne (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2002).

**296** Hans Simon-Pelanda, *Schein, Realität und Utopie: Untersuchungen zur Einheit eines Staatsromans (Herzog Ernst B)*. Regensburger Beiträge zur deutschen Sprach- und Literaturwissenschaft. Reihe B, 24 (Frankfurt a. M. et al.: Peter Lang, 1984).

**297** *Les lais de Marie de France*, ed. Jean Rychner. Les classiques français du Moyen Âge (Paris: Champion, 1978); cf. also Marie de France, *Lais: texte original en ancien français; manuscrit Harley 978 du British Museum*, ed. Nathalie Desgrugilliers-Billard (Clermont-Ferrand: Éd. Paleo, 2007). Here I quote, which reflects the library conditions during my research stay in Germany in the summer of 2019, from Marie de France, *Lais: Guigemar, Bisclavret, Lanval, Yonec, Laüstic, Chievrefoil*. Altfranzösisch/Deutsch, ed. Philipp Jeserich (Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam jun., 2015), v. 26. This has, actually, the advantage of staying very close to the original, translating exactly verse by verse. See also Marie de France, *Die Lais*. Übersetzt, mit einer Einleitung, einer Bibliographie sowie Anmerkungen versehen von Dietmar Rieger. Klassische Texte des romanischen Mittelalters, 19 (Munich: Wilhelm Fink, 1980). Research on Marie de France is legion; see, for instance, Judith R. Rothschild, *Narrative Technique in the Lais of Marie de France: Themes and Variations*. North Carolina Studies in the Romance Languages and Literatures, 1 (Chapel Hill, NC: U.N.C. Dept. of Romance Languages, 1974); cf. also the

accounts, there are countless fictional, fantastic elements, which are supposed to be accepted as relevant (not necessarily as true) to convey the critical messages in the text. Fantasy and concrete, realistic features interlace here so intimately that we can hardly dissect them and treat them separately.

In “Guigemar,” for instance, the young protagonist goes hunting and kills a doe, but the arrow bounces back and penetrates one of his thighs, which makes him fall off his horse. Before the animal dies, she addresses him and informs him that he would never be healed by any medicine (herb or root) unless he would be treated by a woman who would be willing to accept the greatest pain and torture out of love for him (vv. 115–16), clearly a literary metaphor of the experience of love.<sup>298</sup>

Guigemar fully accepts the doe’s instruction, but he knows of no woman who would love him enough to heal him, so he sends his servants away, binds up his wound, and leaves the site to go on his quest to recover with the help of a woman in love with him. Marie deliberately projects a situation that is far removed from concrete reality, but it serves her well to explore critical issues in the lives of young people who have not yet experienced love. Guigemar is fully aware that he must go alone to find that prophesied lady, and he does not want any of his friends or family members to hold him back, as unbelievable as the doe’s words might have sounded. His wound forces him to depart from his customary world where he could never develop any feelings, so we realize immediately how much Marie here predicated her narrative on the imaginary in order to develop a metaphorical platform for the deeper understanding of love.<sup>299</sup>

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contributions to *In Quest of Marie de France: A Twelfth-Century Poet*, ed. Chantal A. Maréchal (Lewiston, NY, Lampeter, Wales, and Queenston, Ont.: Edwin Mellon Press, 1992); Howard Bloch, *The Anonymous Marie de France* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2003); Sharon Kinoshita and Peggy McCracken, *Marie de France: A Critical Companion*. Gallica, 24 (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2014); Albrecht Classen, *Reading Medieval European Women Writers: Strong Literary Witnesses from the Past* (Frankfurt a. M.: Peter Lang, 2016).

**298** Matilda Tomaryn Bruckner, “Speaking Through Animals in Marie de France’s *Lais* and *Fables*,” *A Companion to Marie de France*, ed. Logan E. Whalen. Brill’s Companions to the Christian Tradition, 27 (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2011), 157–85. She concludes most insightfully: “In search of the figurative truths of fable and fiction or the literal truth of lived human experience, we can be sure that Marie invites her readers to seek meaning in the rich obscurities of her *lais*, as in the tensions between narrative and morality staged in her *Fables*. Speaking or speechless, her animals have many a tale to tell us humans” (185).

**299** Roberta L. Krueger, “The Wound, the Knot, and the Book: Marie de France and Literary Traditions of Love in the *Lais*,” *A Companion to Marie de France* (see note 298), 55–87; see also Antoinette Saly, “Observations sur le lai de Guigemar,” *Image, Structure et sens: études arthuriennes Sénéfiance* 34 (1994): 7–21; C. Marz, “The 3 Wounds of Guigemar – The Lai of ‘Guigemar’ by Marie de France,” *Germanisch-Romanische Monatsschrift* 39.4 (1989): 377–86.



When Guigemare arrives at the nearby coast, he is surprised to find a black ship, which is constructed out of ebony wood, without any crew, and as soon as he has lain down on a bed, does the ship take off and transport him across the sea. While the ship by itself and its automatic mechanism are already astounding enough, certainly parallel to numerous other automata reported about in medieval literature (cf. The Stricker's *Daniel von dem Blühenden Tal*, ca. 1220),<sup>300</sup> the fabulous bed placed in the middle of it outdoes everything he has encountered so far, especially because of its material splendor, which builds direct connections to King Solomon's bed in the Old Testament (*Song of Songs*, 3, 9–10; Vulgate).<sup>301</sup> The material splendor of the bed coverings and the frame exceed all expectations and remind us of the architectural splendor reported about in *Herzog Ernst*.<sup>302</sup> Are we supposed to believe that Guigemar actually enjoyed his rest in such a sumptuous bed as it was commonly found in royal households? The magical set-up seems to indicate the opposite, especially because the protagonist suffers from much pain and anxiety about his destiny. But soon enough he arrives at the harbor below a city where an old and jealous king basically holds his young wife as a prisoner out of deep jealousy and lack of emotional response from his lady who does not love him, of course. This then develops exactly into the situation as the doe had predicted, as the young woman takes the stranger in, heals his wound, while both fall in love with each other.

One and a half years later, after they both have enjoyed greatest happiness with each other – without her having ever become pregnant – they are finally discovered, and Guigemar is forced to leave with the same ship that had transported him to that kingdom. Again, fantasy or magic enters the picture because the old husband would believe the young man's incredible story only if the ship were to arrive again (v. 613), which then also happens. Indeed, the unmanned ship is ready for him and takes him directly back to the harbor where he had originally left. Guigemar has returned to reality, so to speak, and he has to wait for two years until his lady has the surprising opportunity to leave her prison and to find the same magical ship, which transports her to the same land where her lover is waiting for her.

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**300** For further examples, see Elly Rachel Truitt, *Medieval Robots: Mechanism, Magic, Nature, and Art*. The Middle Ages Series (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015); she is curiously unaware of Stricker's narrative; see my review in *Rocky Mountain Review* 70.1 (2016): 120–22.

**301** Karin Lerchner, *Lectulus floridus: zur Bedeutung des Bettes in Literatur und Handschriftenillustration des Mittelalters*. Pictura et poesis, 6 (Cologne, Weimar, and Vienna: Böhlau, 1993).

**302** Albrecht Classen, "The Dream City in Medieval Literature" (see note 286).

Both the doe and the ship thus operate as agents in the lives of these two lovers, which is paralleled by the unique knots which both had applied to the belt (for her) and the shirt (for him) as signs or codes that are to facilitate that they can recognize each other after their involuntary separation. In many respects, we could identify here a case of a medieval ‘fairy tale,’ though the framework and the employed symbolism speak a different language. Nevertheless, Marie specifically allows her own imagination and fantasy to come to the fore and to address thereby a fundamental question regarding courtly love, that is, regarding how to find the true love in one’s life.<sup>303</sup>

There is almost more fantasy and imagination in this *lai* than concrete physical reality. Nevertheless, Marie convinces us on every page that the animal, the ship, the events, the knots, and the love between those two people are all highly significant and relevant for the understanding of love as a fundamental force in human life. Even though the lady appears like a fairy, due to her extraordinary beauty, as we learn when she has arrived in the harbor owned by the knight Merïdu (v. 704), her destiny is basically pre-determined by the love between herself and Guigemar, who eventually succeeds in defeating Merïadu, killing him, and destroying the castle in order to regain his beloved. The fantastic elements do not distract at all from the narrative; on the contrary, they enhance its ethical, moral, and philosophical messages, underscoring the mysterious meaning of love.

However, the two lovers first must unravel the respective knots, test the unreal condition, and confirm the validity of the facts, as fantastic as they might be, and once both the shirt and the belt have confirmed each other’s identity, do they both know for sure that they are in the presence of their beloved. Reality, however, reenters the picture since Merïaduc rejects Guigemar’s request to grant him the lady, which requires a massive war effort on Guigemar’s part. Even though we never learn about the destiny of the lady’s old husband, about Guigemar’s parents and family, or whether the new couple has ever children,<sup>304</sup> happiness has been achieved through their re-unification and marriage.

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**303** It has been a common approach in Marie scholarship to recognize here a form of ‘chastity belt,’ see Shira Schwam-Baird, “Would a Gentleman Belt a Lady? Chastity Belts (and Knots) in Marie de France’s ‘Guigemar,’” *Mediaevalia* 22 (1999): 323–42; for a contrastive and more comparative approach, see Albrecht Classen, “Der Gürtel als Objekt und Symbol in der Literatur des Mittelalters: Marie de France, *Nibelungenlied*, *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* und Dietrich von der Glezze,” *Mediaevistik* 21 (2008, appeared 2010): 11–37.

**304** Roberta L. Krueger, “The Wound, the Knot, and the Book: Marie de France and Literary Traditions of Love in the *Lais*,” *A Companion to Marie de France* (see note 298), 55–87; here 63–64. As to the presence or absence of children in medieval literature, see the contributions to *Childhood in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance: The Results of a Paradigm Shift in the History of Mentality*, ed. Albrecht Classen (Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2005).

The narrator never hesitates to engage with all those fanciful elements and only concludes, “De cest cunte k’oï avez / Fu *Guigemar* li lais trovez” (vv. 883–84; about this account, which you have heard, the *lai Guigemar* was created).

Marie incorporates many additional fanciful features in her other *lais*, whether we think of the werewolf in *Bisclavret*, the falcon-man in *Yonec*, the magical weasel in *Eliduc*, or the fairy in *Lanval*, some of which find parallels in the travel writings by her contemporary Gerald of Wales (see above). Her *lais* constantly border on the genre of fairy tale, and yet they are not fairy-tales in the vein of those stories which children tend to read or consume (Marie-Catherine Le Jumel de Barneville, Charles Perrault, Brothers Grimm, Anderson). Whether it makes even sense to talk about fairy-tales in our context would be another question; we know, however, of the enormous difficulties of categorizing those tales with fairy-tale motives in generic terms.<sup>305</sup>

## Other Medieval Fanciful Narratives

The *Gesta Romanorum* and the tales contained in *Dolopathos*, the countless short verse narratives in the vernaculars, the fables, the didactic sermon-like tales by Caesarius of Heisterbach, the entertaining accounts by Walter Map, and many others appear to reveal similarities, and yet, there is one most important difference. Fairy tales composed and published by Christian Andersen and the Brothers Grimm specifically address children and appeal to or evoke their fantastic imagination.<sup>306</sup> In the pre-modern world, whether we think of Marie de France’s *lais* or fairy-like narratives such as *Gauriel von Montaubel*, *Friedrich von Schwaben*, or *Peter von Staufenberg*, not to forget the enormously popular corpus of tales focused on the figure of Melusine, didactic, ethical, political, religious, and moral elements dominate, after all, and they all address adult

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**305** Jack Zipes, *Fairy Tales and the Art of Subversion: The Classical Genre for Children and the Process of Civilization* (New York: Routledge, 1991); *The Irresistible Fairy Tale: The Cultural and Social History of a Genre* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2012). The genre of fairy tales has been discussed already from many different perspectives; see now the huge and really important *Enzyklopädie des Märchens: Handwörterbuch zur historischen und vergleichenden Erzählforschung*, ed. Kurt Ranke, later ed. Rolf Wilhelm Brednich. 15 Vols. (Berlin and New York, later Boston: Walter de Gruyter, 1977–2015). In order to focus on larger and more historical issues, this volume will not engage more specifically with the fairy tale and touch upon this genre only on occasion.

**306** Carl Lindahl, “Definition and History of Fairy Tales,” *The Routledge Companion to Media and Fairy-Tale Cultures* (2018; see note 82), 11–19.

audiences with the purpose of conveying relevant teachings that are not predicated on a simplistic binary system and an assembly of imaginary creatures.<sup>307</sup>

Granted, hardly any courtly romance would be devoid of fanciful element, and most knights enter into fanciful worlds where they accomplish their adventures.<sup>308</sup> Heinrich von dem Türlin's *Diu Crône* (ca. 1230), with its highly imaginative but also inexplicable "Wunderketten," confirm additionally how much Arthurian poets were aware of and interested in such miracles or transgressions where outlandish phenomena appear to the protagonist who always wants to inquire what is going on and what those phenomena might mean, but who always fails in that task for understandable reasons.<sup>309</sup> The same appears in the various version of the Old Welsh *Mabinogion*, in many Old Norse (Icelandic) sagas, and numerous other medieval narratives.<sup>310</sup> There are shapeshifters, berserks, magicians, sorcerers, and other individuals who command supernatural

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**307** Wolfgang Maaz, "Märchen und Märchenmotive im Mittelalter," *Lexikon des Mittelalters*, vol. VI: *Lukasbilder bis Plantagenêt* (Munich and Zürich: Artemis & Winkler Verlag, 1993), 224–25; Maren Clausen-Stolzenburg, *Märchen und mittelalterliche Literaturtradition*. Beiträge zur neueren Literaturgeschichte, 3 (Heidelberg: C. Winter, 1995); Friedrich Wolfzettel, *Le conte en palimpseste: Studien zur Funktion von Märchen und Mythos im französischen Mittelalter* (Stuttgart: Steiner, 2005).

**308** Hans-Dieter Mauritz, *Der Ritter im magischen Reich: Märchenelemente im französischen Abenteuerroman des 12. und 13. Jahrhunderts*. Europäische Hochschulschriften, 13 (Bern and Frankfurt a. M.: Peter Lang, 1974).

**309** Heinrich von dem Türlin, *Diu Crône*. *Kritische mittelhochdeutsche Leseausgabe mit Erläuterungen*, ed. Gudrun Felder (Berlin and Boston: Walter de Gruyter, 2012); for an English trans., see *The Crown: A Tale of Sir Gawain and King Arthur's Court*, trans. J. W. Thomas (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1989); as to the miraculous phenomena, cf. Johannes Keller, *Diu Crône Heinrichs von dem Türlin: Wunderketten, Gral und Tod*. Deutsche Literatur von den Anfängen bis 1700, 25 (Bern, Berlin, et al.: Peter Lang, 1997); Albrecht Classen, "The Literary Puzzle of Heinrich von dem Türlin's *Diu Crône* Seen from a Postmodern Perspective," *Michigan Germanic Studies* 24.2 (1998): 111–28; id., "Self and Other in the Arthurian World: Heinrich von dem Türlin's 'Wunderketten,'" *Monatshefte* 96.1 (2004): 20–39. For an extensive discussion of the fictional elements, see Matthias Meyer, *Die Verfügbarkeit der Fiktion. Interpretationen und poetologische Untersuchungen zum Artusroman und zur aventiurehaften Dietrichepik des 13. Jahrhunderts*. Germanisch-Romanische Monatsschrift: Beiheft, 12 (Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag Winter, 1994).

**310** *The Four Branches of the Mabinogi*, ed. and trans. by Matthieu Boyd (Peterborough, Ont.: Broadview Press, 2017); William J. Gruffydd, *Folklore and Myth in the Mabinogion* (Cardiff: University of Cardiff Press, 1964); Albrecht Classen, "Multilingualism and Multiculturalism in the Pre-Modern Age: Medieval Welsh and Icelandic Literature in a Literature Survey Course. Interdisciplinary Approaches on a Pan-European Level," to appear in *Leuvense Bijdragen*. See now also the excellent volume *The Cambridge History of Welsh Literature*, ed. Geraint Evans and Helen Fulton (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019).

powers and interact with human society in a variety of ways. For the poets, there is never any doubt about the reality of those imaginations, and they do not see any need to explain or justify those elements in their often rather sober, pedestrian accounts.<sup>311</sup>

We can even step further back to encounter many fairy-tale motives, whether we think of the dragon-slayer, the master over the dwarfs, the lover of elves, and many others. The Anglo-Saxon *Beowulf* (ca. 700 C.E.) clearly indicates the huge interest in and relevance of mysterious topics in order to comprehend a major hero's character, source of power, accomplishments, and also weaknesses (cf. the *Nibelungenlied*, ca. 1200).<sup>312</sup> As Edward Currie now argues in his contribution to this volume, we could read this Old English epic poem and a variety of Old Norse Eddic poems as specific projections of an alternative political and military reality, warning the readers/listeners about the dangers of unchecked violence and unstable political actions.<sup>313</sup> Fantasy and political advice intriguingly merge in those texts.

Marie de France is no exception, though in her case she utilizes most of those fairy-tale elements in order to explore difficult conditions in the emotional relationships between the genders. Her fairy in *Lanval*, for instance, contrasts strongly with King Arthur's wife, who tries to seduce Lanval, and then, when she realizes that she is not going to be successful, claims that he is a homosexual. When that does not work, she approaches her husband and accuses the young man of having tried to sleep with her, which leads to a long series of judicial complications for the protagonist who is eventually rescued by his beloved, but then decides no longer to stay in this world in King

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**311** This issue has already been discussed from a variety of perspectives; see, for instance, *Old Norse Myths, Literature and Society*, ed. Margaret Clunies Ross (Odense: University Press of Southern Denmark, 2003); François-Xavier Dillmann, *Les magiciens dans l'Islande ancienne: études sur la représentation de la magie islandaise et de ses agents dans les sources littéraires norroises*. Acta Academiae Regiae Gustavi Adolphi, 92 (Uppsala: Kungl. Gustav Adolfs Akademien för Svensk Folkkultur, 2006); Nicolas Meylan, *Magic and Kingship in Medieval Iceland: The Construction of a Discourse of Political Resistance*. Studies in Viking and Medieval Scandinavia, 3 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2014).

**312** See now the contribution to this volume by Daniel F. Pigg; cf. also Susanne Dinkl, *Untote, Riesen, Zwerge und Elfen: zur Konstruktion populären (Aber)Glaubens seit dem frühen Mittelalter*. Kulturtransfer, 9 (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2017).

**313** Edward Currie, "Political Ideals, Monstrous Counsel, and the Literary Imagination in *Beowulf*," here in this volume. See also Albrecht Classen, "The Principles of Honor, Virtue, Leadership, and Ethics" (see note 1).

Arthur's company, and all this very much in the vein of the biblical story of Potiphar's wife (Gen. 39).<sup>314</sup>

For Marie, all those imaginative figures or creatures reflect on deeper issues of character, ethics, ideals, and values. Bisclavret, for instance, in the eponymous *lai*, although he is transformed into a werewolf, succeeds to communicate in revealing his noble self to the king when the hunters are already about to kill him out of fear of the monstrous creature. By humbling himself before the king, holding his stirrup and kissing his leg and foot (vv. 148–49), he transcends his beastly appearance and reveals his true inner self. For the medieval audience, this clearly allowed them to comprehend the difference between the body and the mind and the great need to overcome the former.<sup>315</sup>

As sadly as *Bisclavret* concludes, with the former's wife and all new descendants being badly punished (loss or absence of the nose), the werewolf knight can regain his human shape and thus his position at court, but from then on unmarried and without a family. The imaginary element assumes in this text a critical function to illustrate the profound transition from the human to the beastly and then back to the human again. The miraculous, as in the case of the magic potion produced by the young lady's aunt in Salerno to help her lover gain enough strength to carry her up a mountain to meet the father's virtually impossible demand on all of his daughter's suitors (*Les deuz amanz*), could have achieved the happy end, but instead of taking that potion, the young man suddenly wants to prove his superior masculine power against all odds and actually achieves the task, but only to break down and to die from a collapsed heart.

The imagined happy outcome, all orchestrated by the princess with great rational calculations, fails and is lost because the young squire wants to prove his own strength and demonstrate to the public his extraordinary masculinity, thereby defeating the near-incestuous royal father. If he had accepted his mistress's magical potion, everything would have worked out according to her plans. As Marie indicates through this *lai*, people need to dream, to pursue their imagination, and to translate it into reality if they want to accomplish big goals and ideals. The male protagonist ultimately failed because he refused to believe in the fanciful, the miraculous, and wanted to rely only on his own strength out of pride and arrogance.

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**314** I will deal with many of these fairy figures in medieval literature in my own contribution to this volume. For the fairy or genie in Arabic literature in al-Andalus, see the contribution to this volume by Jessica Zeitler.

**315** P. Bystricky, "The Image of the Werewolf in Medieval Literature," *Historicky Casopis* 62.4 (2014): 597–620; Eleanor Hodgson, "Rewriting the Werewolf: Transformations of Bisclavret in Guillaume de Palerne," *French Studies Bulletin* 37/138 (2016): 9–13.

He imagined that he could demonstrate superior masculinity and overestimated his strength, which leads to his death. His lady, by contrast, imagined clearly what the consequences of his failure could be, so she prepared everything to the utmost and in greatest detail, but also failed because she had not counted in his stubbornness, pride, and self-centeredness. In other words, she expected him to collaborate with her to achieve their shared goal, whereas he suddenly regarded the task set by her father as a challenge pitting himself against the older man, which thus destroyed both of their happiness.

## ***The Nibelungenlied* – The Epic Nightmare of the Apocalypse**

The same phenomenon can be observed in many other cases, such as in the anonymous *Nibelungenlied* (ca. 1200), equally popular, but belonging to the heroic genre.<sup>316</sup> Fantasy matters extensively here, but its involvement in human life brings about nothing but devastation, killing, and war. The appearance of the semi-god and hero, Siegfried, at the court of King Gunther at Worms causes a major disturbance that will never be solved until everyone has died. Siegfried is not only the future king of the Netherlands, but also the lord over the kingdom of dwarfs; moreover, he has killed a dragon and taken a bath in its blood, which made his skin impenetrable, apart from one spot on his shoulder where the leaf of a linden tree had protected his skin from the blood.

The first part of the epic poem follows his accomplishments, through which he constantly belittles all the other heroes, until Hagen manages to kill him from behind. The second part consists of the attempts by Siegfried's widow, Kriemhild, to avenge this murder, which ultimately brings death to all the Burgundians, including Kriemhild and her son. Fabulous and imaginary elements combine with political, ethical, moral, and military reflections, and despite the poem's 'fictional' character, a term perhaps inappropriate because of the heroic genre, it opens many avenues into the realm of imagination, which demonstrates, once again, many ramifications regarding twelfth-century society with its anxieties, hopes, and anticipations.

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**316** *Das Nibelungenlied und die Klage, nach der Handschrift 857 der Stiftsbibliothek St. Gallen; mittelhochdeutscher Text, Übersetzung und Kommentar*, ed. Joachim Heinzle. Bibliothek des Mittelalters, 12 (Berlin: Deutscher Klassiker-Verlag, 2013). There are many other good editions and translations available.

The *Nibelungenlied*, very similar to *Beowulf* though written down almost five hundred years later, proves to be a daunting epic poem in which fundamental human conflicts are presented, none of which are harmoniously solved. Instead, we hear of war, usurpation, rape, murder, betrayal, deception, mockery, fear, anger, and wrath, which altogether ultimately leads to a war that engulfs everyone, friend and foe, the perfect mix for the creation of a literary myth.<sup>317</sup> The audience is constantly confronted with awesome episodes of an extreme kind, and those in turn represent rather common human conflicts, here, however, vastly expanded and highly dramatized. By way of imagination and fantasy the epic poem successfully projects those terrifying situations and scenes and invites the listeners to reflect upon the various consequences as they might apply to their own lives.<sup>318</sup>

## Wolfram von Eschenbach's *Parzival* and His *Titurel*

As much as knightly accomplishments matter centrally in Wolfram von Eschenbach's *Parzival* (ca. 1205), we also confront many elements of fantasy and imagination. Considering the secret but most significant role which the Holy Grail plays here, similar to many other comparable Grail romances (e.g., Chrétien de Troyes, *Perceval*), we gain solid insight into medieval mentality which was so heavily predicated on the projection of otherworldliness.<sup>319</sup>

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**317** For a successful psychological reading, see Irmgard Rüsenberg, *Der Zorn der Nibelungen: Reivalität und Rache im 'Nibelungenlied'* (Cologne, Weimar, and Vienna: Böhlau, 2005); cf. also Jan-Dirk Müller, *Spielregeln für den Untergang: die Welt des Nibelungenliedes* (Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2010); Joachim Heinzle, *Mythos Nibelungenlied* (Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam jun., 2013).

**318** Even the projection of spaces sheds light on the world of imagination in the literary text; see Franziska Hammer, *Räume erzählen – erzählende Räume: Raumdarstellung als Poetik; mit einer exemplarischen Analyse des "Nibelungenlied"*. Beiträge zur älteren Literaturgeschichte (Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag Winter, 2018); as to the heroic element, see now Sarah K. Weber, *Alter Held – neue Welt: der Heros in der germanischen Heldenepik des Mittelalters* (Baden-Baden: Tectum Verlag, 2017); for a solid overview with additional structural reflections, see Jan-Dirk Müller, *Das Nibelungenlied*. 4th, newly rev. and expanded ed. Klassiker-Lektüren, 5 (Berlin: Erich Schmidt, 2015).

**319** Wolfram von Eschenbach, *Parzival*. Studienausgabe. 2nd ed. Mittelhochdeutscher Text nach der sechsten Ausgabe von Karl Lachmann. Übersetzung von Peter Knecht (Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter). There are various good English and other translations available, but here I rely on my own. The text is divided into books, and on a lower level into a uniform



It would be impossible to examine here every aspect of this major romance, one of the masterpieces of Middle High German literature. Within our narrow focus, suffice it to bring to light how the poet operates with the imaginary and utilizes the fantastic in order to develop a global, almost cosmic world view which suggests new ways out of the old courtly society and forward toward a universal perspective embracing all people even far beyond the constraints of Christianity.

Almost like in a modern *Bildungsroman*, the medieval poet traces the life and destiny of his young protagonist Parzival after his father Gahmuret has died in the military service of the Oriental ruler Baldac (as a result of betrayal). Even though his mother Herzeloide tries her best to remove her child from the world of knighthood, she fails and dies from a broken heart when Parzival ruthlessly leaves the sylvan solitude where she had retired as a grieving widow. Undoubtedly, Herzeloide was determined by her own ideas about knighthood and the cruelty of that world, but her own mental concepts do not have enough power to overcome her young son's dreams and also inner nature, especially once he has been exposed to some knights crossing the forest, who immediately awaken his desire to be someone like them (120.11–124.21).

Parzival is, unbeknown to himself, the predestined successor to the Grail throne, but he is too young to understand the miraculous circumstances of the Grail itself when he arrives, almost by divine guidance, at the Grail castle of Munsalvæsche. King Anfortas is suffering terribly from a wound in his loins as a result of erotic transgressions, and his successor only has to ask an empathetic question to relieve him from his suffering.

However, Parzival does not yet understand what is expected from him, and he follows the precepts and social rules that he had learned from the old count Gurnemanz. Tragically, those do not apply at the Grail castle, so everything seems to be lost at first. The romance then continues and involves countless other episodes, figures, events, and dramatic actions. But in the course of time, the narrator begins to reveal the secret behind the Grail, a most astounding account of divine intervention into human affairs which is to be identified through a careful reading of the star constellations.<sup>320</sup>

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sequence of chapters, each consisting of thirty verses. Here I will cite only by chapter and verse/s. The best introduction and critical discussion of Wolfram and the relevant research is provided by Joachim Bumke, *Wolfram von Eschenbach*. 8th completely rev. ed. Sammlung Metzler, 36 (Stuttgart: J. B. Metzler, 2004). The critical research literature on Wolfram is legion by now. However, there is a real dearth of studies dealing with fantasy and imagination in his works.

**320** Volker Mertens, *Der Gral: Mythos und Literatur* (Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam jun. 2003); Danielle Buschinger, *Le graal dans le pays de langue allemande*. Essais sur le Moyen âge, 61 (Paris: Champion, 2017).

Several times the narrator offers some references to the secret upon which the Grail was built, but even though he subsequently goes into more details, the full outline seems almost too fantastic to fit even within the framework of medieval Arthurian literature.<sup>321</sup> First, within the section dedicated to Parzival's friend Gawan, Wolfram relates that the Provençal writer Kyô't had originally found the secret in Toledo, Spain, recorded in a pagan (Arabic?) language (416.20–30). The author of that report had been the pagan Flegetânîs, who in turn had read it in the stars (454.1–30). In the following chapter, Kyô't's effort to identify the true story of the Grail is outlined, and Wolfram then relates all this to himself insofar as he as well now reveals the origin and meaning of the Grail, placing himself on the same level as those mighty and highly learned forerunners. While Wolfram certainly drew from Chrétien's *Perceval*, in the present context he comments rather negatively on it and gives more praise to Flegetânîs and Kyô't, who had demonstrated true scholarly mastership in that matter (827.1–14).

Whether there ever might have been such a source in Arabic which then was translated by Kyô't into French might be a moot question today. We do not need to search specifically whether Wolfram developed a literary riddle or only played with his audience's fantasy, as intriguing as this entire issue might be. Modern research has mostly agreed that here we face a deliberate attempt to ambiguate and maybe mystify the courtly romance and to add a religious dimension.<sup>322</sup>

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**321** The basic narrative elements and the structure of the Grail account are well summarized by various scholars, such as Heiko Hartmann, *Einführung in das Werk Wolframs von Eschenbach*. Einführung Germanistik (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2015); but now also online in a rather exemplary fashion by an anonymous author at: [http://mediae.wiki.de/wiki/Wolfram\\_Kyot\\_frou\\_%C3%A2ventiure\\_%E2%80%94\\_Zum\\_Ursprung\\_der\\_Geschichte\\_in\\_Wolframs\\_Parzival](http://mediae.wiki.de/wiki/Wolfram_Kyot_frou_%C3%A2ventiure_%E2%80%94_Zum_Ursprung_der_Geschichte_in_Wolframs_Parzival) (last accessed on Feb. 18, 2020). Here is also a useful bibliography of the relevant research. The most relevant forum for Wolfram research can be found in the book series *Wolfram-Studien*.

**322** Martin Baisch, "Ästhetisierung und Unverfügbarkeit. Strategien der Inszenierung von Wissen bei Wolfram und Chrétien," *Wolframs Parzival-Roman im europäischen Kontext*, ed. Susanne Köbele, Eckart Conrad Lutz, and Klaus Ridder. *Wolfram-Studien*, 23 (Berlin: Erich Schmidt, 2014), 207–50; Ricarda Bauschke, "Chrétien und Wolfram: Erzählerische Selbstfindung zwischen Stoffbewältigung und Narrationskunst," *ibid.*, 113–30; Burkhard Hasebrink, "Die Ambivalenz des Erneuerns. Zur Aktualisierung des Tradierten im mittelalterlichen Erzählen," *Fiktion und Fiktionalität in den Literaturen des Mittelalters: Jan-Dirk Müller zum 65. Geburtstag*, ed. Ursula Peters and Rainer Warning (Munich: Wilhelm Fink, 2009), 205–34. See also Albrecht Classen, "Noch einmal zu Wolframs 'spekulativer' Kyô't-Quelle im Licht jüdischer Kultur und Philosophie des zwölften Jahrhunderts," *Studi Medievali* XLVI (2005): 281–308.

We are certainly dealing with a literary, maybe also religious game which was not uncommon in the Middle Ages when poets and artists enjoyed defying ordinary expectations and standard norms and rules and suggested through their texts that human actions might not be the same as their intentions, a phenomenon we later find in the verse narratives of Heinrich Kaufringer once again (ca. 1400).<sup>323</sup> As St. Augustine had already noted in his *Confessions*, “Many of the things we do may therefore seem wrong to men but are approved in the light of your knowledge, and many which men applaud are condemned in your eyes.”<sup>324</sup>

To be sure, Wolfram placed himself as the one who related the account of the Grail to his Middle High German audience among the most esoteric writers who claimed to have learned a divine message and now accepted his responsibility to convey this secret story to humankind. After all, Kyôt, apparently a converted Jew (453.18), was able to read Arabic (416.27), but he himself spoke French, so might have been a Jewish scholar from the Provence, if he was not simply a projection of Wolfram’s mind. Flegetânîs is presented as a Jewish scholar, and as a direct descendent from King Solomon (453.25–30), and the poet laments that such a learned man did not know of Christianity (453.1–8). According to the narrator, Kyôt had asked Wolfram in person to keep the account of the Grail a secret until the grand narrative would bring it to life by itself (453.5–10).

But what is this Grail, which scholarship has already discussed so many times? Wolfram demonstrates his most brilliant literary ability in outlining an almost miraculous account of how Munsalvæsche suddenly transforms from a location of doom and gloom into a site where all the hope of humankind to achieve divine salvation can be realized after all. The universal happiness and joy about the sudden and good outcome for Anfortas, his miraculous healing, and the triumphant crowning of Parzival as the new Grail king do not know any bounds, but the narrator makes sure to frame it all in religious terms because Parzival’s uncle Trevrizent formulates the ultimate observation of how God is working in human life without people fully understanding what is happening (797.23–30).

The Grail itself proves to be an infinite source of food supplies and beverages, and the entire company festively celebrates the banquet which combines

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<sup>323</sup> Albrecht Classen, “Das Paradox der widersprüchlichen Urteilsprechung und Weltwahrnehmung” (see note 138).

<sup>324</sup> St. Augustine, *Confessions* (see note 161), Book III, 9, p. 67.

religious with secular features (808.23–30 and 809.1–30 to 810.1–2). Ironically, however, Parzival's half-brother Feirefiz cannot partake in all the festivities because he is still a heathen, but once he has been baptized, his eyes are opened, and he can then also pursue his love for the Grail maiden Repanse de Schoye.

Wolfram's *Parzival* thus operates on a most fantastic level, combining fantasy and imagination in a truly intricate fashion. There is no need to question the legitimacy and validity of the narrator's claims because they pertain mostly to another dimension at any rate and force the audience to reflect deeply on the role of the divine within the framework of secular knighthood. This romance thus confirms in a most intricate fashion how much for medieval authors and poets the esoteric, the spiritual, and the imaginative mattered. But each manifestation of that alternative world required new critical approaches, and in each fictional framework new challenges emerge that test human epistemology in a confusing, rather difficult world.<sup>325</sup>

To this enormously fascinating and imaginary account about the Grail in *Parzival*, we can also add a few comments about Wolfram's *Titarel* (ca. 1220), a fragmentary text in which some loose narrative threads are continued in order to close a few gaps in the former work.<sup>326</sup> However, the poet also adds new narrative elements characterized by considerably imaginative potency, which might almost evoke the genre of fairy tales. The point that interests us here emerges only in the second part where the two lovers, Sigune and Schionatulander, enjoy their free time in the midst of a forest where a clearing next to a creek allows them to relax and to pursue their entertainment, each to his/her own. However, a dog, called Gardeviaz, as the inscription on the enormous leash informs us, suddenly enters their world and destroys both their happiness and their future as lovers.<sup>327</sup>

The miraculous aspect is not the dog itself, basically an ordinary animal used for hunting, but the miraculous leash upon which are written accounts of tragic lovers. Since Sigune reads those with great intensity, and does not stop at the knot with which the dog is tied to the tent pole, she unravels it, which

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325 *Artusroman und Mythos*, ed. Friedrich Wolfzettel et al. (2010; see note 209).

326 Wolfram von Eschenbach, *Titarel*. Herausgegeben, übersetzt und mit einem Stellenkommentar sowie einer Einführung versehen von Helmut Brackert und Stephan Fuchs-Jolie (Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2003).

327 See now the contributions to *Tiere: Begleiter des Menschen in der Literatur des Mittelalters*, ed. Judith Klinger and Andreas Kraß (Cologne, Weimar, and Vienna: Böhlau, 2017). As real as animals have always been, as much have they also figured in literary texts as the result of human imagination. Bernd Bastert, for instances, discusses the horse, Denise Grduszkak, the cat, Lina Herz, the dog, Werner Röcke, the ass, Jan-Dirk Müller, the beaver, etc.

gives the dog the freedom to run away, and thus the account on the leash also escapes, literally and metaphorically.<sup>328</sup> She unravels, in other words, not only the knot in the leash, but she tries, in reality, to unravel the knot in the text, the truth about the correlation of love and death. The imaginary takes over the control of her and in her foolish pursuit of extreme love she ultimately chooses death, as we know from *Parzival*.

Once the dog has escaped, both lovers are left behind with bloody wounds on their bodies; Sigune is bleeding because the gems that formed the letters on the leash had run through her palms when she tried to hold back the dog, or the text, badly scratching her skin. Schionatulander tried to run after the dog, but because before he had been standing barefoot in the creek catching fish, his feet are now bloody from the brambles and thorns, which made it impossible for him to follow the dog through the underbrush and catch it again as he had managed when it had appeared first. Its wild nature, the uncontrolled and uncivilized bestiality, the desire to kill the prey, determines the dog (stanza 158), which the narrator ominously correlates with the force of love that has already had deadly consequences for some of the young people the story on the dog leash is talking about (stanzas 151–58).

The dog's name is fantastic enough to alert all readers/listeners about the true message of this tragic love story: "Gardeviāz," which the narrator then translates into Middle High German: "'Hüete der verte!'" (stanza 148, 4; Guard your way). Life is full of dangers, and passionate love drives people into extremes. Wolfram's fantastic account thus proves to be a stark warning about the lack of self-control, lack of discipline, and lack of rationality in a sea of emotions brought about by imagination. The two lovers ultimately succumb to their death because they are too young, do not enjoy proper counseling and education, and act too emotionally.

Schionatulander tries to de-escalate the situation, dismisses the dog and its fantastic leash as belonging to the world of fiction, or literature, of which he already has learned much, so this new text on the leash could be dismissed as well as far as he is concerned (stanza 169). However, Sigune insists that he retrieve both the dog and the leash because it constitutes the most valuable thing in her entire world (stanza 170), otherwise he would never be able to enjoy her love (stanza 171).

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328 Albrecht Classen, *Utopie und Logos. Vier Studien zu Wolframs von Eschenbach Titirel*. Beiträge zur älteren Literaturgeschichte (Heidelberg: Carl Winter Universitätsverlag, 1990); Alexander Sager, *Minne von maeren: On Wolfram's Titirel*. Transatlantische Studien zu Mittelalter und Früher Neuzeit, 2 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2006); Larissa Schuler-Lang, *Wildes Erzählen – Erzählen vom Wilden: "Parzival", "Busant" und "Wolfdietrich D"*. Literatur – Theorie – Geschichte, 7 (Berlin and Boston: Walter de Gruyter, 2014), ch. 3.4.2.

For her, hence, the imaginary is more important than the factual; she rather loses Schionatulander to the realm of fiction, like the other characters commented about in the text embossed on the leash, than to accept him in flesh and blood here on earth in a more banal fashion. In fact, as we know from Wolfram's *Parzival*, Schionatulander will die on his quest for the dog/text, and Sigune will mourn his death so intensively that she also passes away, both victims of the imaginary that had imposed itself so poignantly and shockingly during their 'time off' or vacation from courtly life.<sup>329</sup>

As Wolfram seems to indicate here, this kind of love as experienced by those two protagonists can only result in death because it is substituted by imaginary ideals that cannot be sustained in reality. The poet, however, achieves with this fragmentary account an astounding accomplishment, creating an entirely innovative motive with the text on the dog leash, and pushing the issue of the symbolic and pragmatic reading of text to its limit, warning the audience to keep a careful distance from the fantastic that could function as a deadly drug, just as in the case of Gottfried's *Tristan* with its magical dog (see below).

In other words, here the poet projects an completely new concept of what text and reading mean and assumes that the audience would accept the figure of the mysterious dog as a functional element to explain his message, as enigmatic as it appears to be. The fragmentary closure means that the audience has to think for itself what the meaning of this short narrative might be in which the fantastic suddenly appears, leaves a deep impact, and then disappears again, very much like in the Middle English *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* (see below).<sup>330</sup>

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**329** Walter Haug, "Erzählen vom Tod her: Sprachkrise, gebrochene Handlung und zerfallende Welt in Wolframs 'Titurel'," id., *Strukturen als Schlüssel zur Welt: kleine Schriften zur Erzählliteratur des Mittelalters*. Kleine Schriften, 1 (1980; Tübingen: Max Niemeyer, 1989), 541–53; id., "Vom Tristan zu Wolframs Titurel oder die Geburt des Romans aus dem Scheitern am Absoluten," *Deutsche Vierteljahrsschrift für Literaturwissenschaft und Geistesgeschichte* 82.2 (2008): 193–204.

**330** In most cases, fragments were deeply disliked in the Middle Ages. Many times poets stepped up to the plate and completed other texts, which the original author had left behind. But here, and in a few other texts, the fragment as a fragment emerges as a topic by itself, imposing an hermeneutic dilemma. See Albrecht Classen, "Wolframs von Eschenbach Titurel-Fragmente und Johanns von Würzburg *Wilhelm von Österreich*: Höhepunkte der höfischen Minnereden," *Amsterdamer Beiträge zur älteren Germanistik* 37 (1993): 75–102; id., "Der Text der nie enden will. Poetologische Überlegungen zu fragmentarischen Strukturen in mittelalterlichen und modernen Texten," *Zeitschrift für Literaturwissenschaft und Linguistik*, Heft 99: *Anfang und Ende*. Ed. Wolfgang Haubrichs (1995), 83–113. For a case where the fragmentary closure constitutes a real narrative failure, see the heroic epic *Der Wunderer* (copied ca. 1490, composed perhaps at the end of the fourteenth century); cf. Albrecht Classen, "Der Wunderer.

While Carl Gustav Jung and, following him, Joseph Campbell pursued a reading of the Arthurian romance based on the collective unconscious, and while Northrop Frye advocated to read in these courtly figures psychological and symbolic archetypes (“wish fulfillment”), it seems more appropriate, or more pragmatic, to recognize here, epistemologically speaking, the outward projection of human imagination through the literary discourse, translating fiction into textual manifestations. As Karen Sullivan now argues:

If romance takes us away from our world through its fictions, it does so in order to bring us back to this world with an improved ability to recognize and appreciate its most intense and heightened moments. It depicts the wonder people feel when they are traveling to a foreign country; the admiration they feel when they are inspired by a political leader’s inaugural address; the ardor they feel when they meet a new person with whom they are falling in love, or the reverence they feel when they behold a precious object, perhaps today an artistic masterpiece or a historical artifact.<sup>331</sup>

The issue in which Sigune ultimately fails is how to engage with one’s own fantasy or dreams and to translate them into practical aspects. We will observe the very opposite action taken by Isolde in the most famous romance version of the *Tristan* legend, that is, in another Middle High German romance, that one, however, fully developed.<sup>332</sup>

## Gottfried von Straßburg’s *Tristan*

For many medieval poets the central question was not whether imaginary aspects existed or had any relevance, but rather how the protagonists operated with them. There is no question that the miraculous, magical, or fantastic mattered centrally in most medieval romances, but we need to determine more precisely what the literary figures then do when those fantastic creatures appear. How important was the imaginary world for those living in the physical reality, at least as projected in the literary framework? Gottfried von

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Hybridität, Erzähllogik und narrative Fragmentierung in der Literatur des deutschen Spätmittelalters,” *Wirkendes Wort* 66.3 (2016): 371–84.

**331** Karen Sullivan, *The Danger of Romance* (2018; see note 266), 24.

**332** Sullivan, *The Danger of Romance* (see note 266), concludes that “romance is that which promises, counterculturally, a realm beyond this one” (280). She repeatedly ponders the ultimate goal of fiction, in its imaginary quality, and, drawing (maybe too) heavily on Tolkien, C. S. Lewis, and Rowling, for instance, suggests that “fantasy has been believed to give us access, perhaps indirectly to God, but directly to the radical otherness of a latently marvelous world” (245).

Straßburg's famous *Tristan* (ca. 1210) provides a highly meaningful example to investigate this phenomenon more in detail.<sup>333</sup>

Tristan himself seems to be the dream that has come true as a courtier, knight, artist, lover, diplomat, and hunter. Similarly, under his tutelage, his future beloved, the Irish princess Isolde, quickly proves to be his equal, and both struggle with all their might and skill to overcome their opponents, including, above all, King Mark, who is married to Isolde. The battle between Tristan and Isolde on the one hand, and the courtly spies and the king on the other centers very much on imagination because all jealousy and envy are deeply predicated on products of fantasy.

Of course, Marke has good reasons to suspect his nephew and his wife having an affair behind his back, but the evidence is missing, and this until almost to the very end when he catches them *in flagrante*. Understandably, Mark is desperate as the cuckolded husband, and as soon as he has gained a sense that his wife might be cheating on him, his fantasy begins to play dangerous tricks with him. Ultimately, we might even wonder whether Mark operates more as a voyeur, driven by his own scopophilia, or whether he is actually stung by the pain of his jealousy because he cannot make his own wife love him.

There are many options to read Gottfried's *Tristan*, obviously as a result of the poet's brilliant mastery as a romancer. So there is no surprise that he also included significant elements of fantasy and imagination into his text, such as the dragon, whom Tristan slays in order to win the princess's hand for his uncle as bride, or the magical potion which Isolde's mother, the Irish Queen Isolde, has concocted for her daughter and her future husband, King Marke, but which is then drunk by Tristan and Isolde, a critical moment in the entire romance setting off a chain of tragic events. In our context, however, one of the most fantastical dogs ever written about in the Middle Ages deserves more of our attention.<sup>334</sup>

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**333** Even though we still do not have a universally accepted critical edition of his text, here I draw from Gottfried von Straßburg, *Tristan*. 2 vols. Nach dem Text von Friedrich Ranke neu herausgegeben, ins Neuhochdeutsche übersetzt, mit einem Stellenkommentar und einem Nachwort von Rüdiger Krohn. 13th ed. (1980; Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam jun., 2010). The research on Gottfried is vast; see here, for instance, the contributions to *Gottfried von Strassburg and the Medieval Tristan Legend: Papers from an Anglo-North American Symposium*, ed. Adrian Stevens and Roy Wisbey. Arthurian Studies. Publications of the Institute of Germanic Studies, 44 (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1990); and to *A Companion to Gottfried von Strassburg's "Tristan"*, ed. Will Hasty. Studies in German Literature, Linguistics, and Culture (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2003); see now Tomas Tomasek, *Gottfried von Straßburg* (Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam, jun., 2007), and Monika Schulz, *Gottfried von Straßburg: "Tristan"* (Stuttgart: J. B. Metzler, 2017).

**334** Albrecht Classen, "Hunde als Freunde und Begleiter in der deutschen Literatur vom Mittelalter bis zur Gegenwart: Reaktion auf den 'Animal Turn' aus motivgeschichtlicher Sicht," *Etudes Germaniques* 73.4 (2018): 441–66.



The little dog Petitcreiu belongs to Tristan's friend Gilan, who appears not to be married and who has only one real joy in this life, his dog. Tristan spends time with Gilan in order to be away from Mark's court during the infamous ordeal under which Isolde had to submit to prove her alleged innocence.<sup>335</sup> She is, of course, very guilty, but through her cunning and secret strategies she can make everyone believe that the opposite is the case. Hence, imagination here trumps reality, but the poet strongly underscores that even Christ supports Isolde's operation and allows her to manipulate him, as the narrator emphasizes: "daz der vil tugenthafte Crist / wintschaffen also ein ermel ist" (vv. 15735–36; that the very virtuous Christ is as subject to the wind as a sleeve). Illusion and deception matter more in the battle for the love between Tristan and Isolde than honesty and realism.

However, as the following scene with the dog demonstrates, Isolde perceives her relationship with Tristan in yet another light, accepting it as the only valid truth for her own self in a threatening, male-dominated world where she exists only as a stranger, having no relatives from Ireland with her, apart from her maid Brangäne. Tristan knows what his lady had to go through to preserve her honor and her life against the accusation of having committed adultery. He is also fully aware of her deep sorrow, from which he is suffering as well because of the strong love between both of them. Suddenly he encounters this magical dog which has two significant properties.

First, its fur is determined by so many colors that no one can identify them clearly. This dream dog, which Gilan's beloved, a fairy, had sent him from Avalon, the medieval utopia (vv. 15807–10), defies all attempts to describe it in its color configuration, thereby illustrating its otherworld qualities. But more than the colors, Petitcreiu stands out because of the magical music which a bell, hanging around its neck, produces. Anyone listening to the sounds of the bell experiences the same phenomenon; all previous thoughts of sorrow and melancholy are replaced by feelings of happiness and joy. Tristan senses, for instance, that all of his love pangs have disappeared, although he had, together with Isolde, consumed the magical potion contained in the wine concocted by Isolde's mother.

Contrary to all feelings of love for his lady, which cause him only pain because of the distance between them, Tristan decides to acquire the dog by means of a deceptive strategy, which he accomplishes, in fact, but only at the cost of casting Gilan into the abyss of endless sorrow himself. The details of his contract with Gilan, of his fight against the giant, and the final enforcement to

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335 Sarah Neumann, *Der gerichtliche Zweikampf: Gottesurteil – Wettstreit – Ehrensache. Mittelalter-Forschungen*, 31 (Ostfildern: Thorbecke, 2010).

hand over the dog to him do not matter for us. We only need to consider here that Gilan follows through with his promise to fulfill any of Tristan's wishes once he would have killed the giant. However, Gilan is devastated after he has turned over his dog to his friend: "ir habet mir zwære an ime benomen / daz beste mîner ougen spil / und mînes hezen wunne vil" (16260–62; in truth, you have robbed me of the highest source of my joy and the happiness of my heart).

Much more critical proves to be Isolde's reaction to the dog once it has reached her court. She is as surprised and amazed about the affect which the music has on her, but she also realizes that this causes her to forget about Tristan and to disregard her love for him. All her pain has disappeared, and so her love as well. However, she cannot stand the thought that she would be happy while her lover would feel deep sorrow and longing for her. Once she has realized the illusionary properties of the bell's sounds, she resolutely decides to reject the false joy and to return from the world of fantasy (here: her official reality) to the world of reality (here: her secret love): "nune welle got der guote, / daz ich in mînem muote / iemer vröude âne in gehabe!" (16385–87; the gracious God cannot want that I ever feel happiness in my mind without him).<sup>336</sup>

Once the music has been destroyed, the access to Avalon is also lost for good, and the sorrow and pain of love, as experienced by Tristan and Isolde, continue to hold sway.<sup>337</sup> Here we encounter the curious but significant situation that the fanciful and imaginary enters human life but is then rejected, if not even destroyed. Tristan hoped to sooth Isolde's pain with the help of the dog or rather the music of the bell, but his dream proved to be illusionary and wrong-headed. Isolde does not fall for it and rejects this panacea or intoxication because she wants to stay loyal to her love for Tristan. In this regard, she acts the very opposite role compared to Sigune in Wolfram von Eschenbach's *Titarel*, who deliberately subscribes to the textual fantasy and thus loses her lover. Isolde, by contrast, does not want to be a prey of the music, or fantasy, so she stays loyal to her lover.

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**336** For an astounding misreading of significant proportion, see now Anna Sziráky and Robert Gisselbaek, "La description de l'indescriptible Petitcreiu entre *parole*, symbole et son: Une lecture mystagogique selon Gottfried de Strasbourg," *Mystique, langage, musique: dire l'indicible au Moyen Âge*, ed. René Wetzels and Laurence Wuidar, together with Katharina Wimmer. *Scrinium Friburgense*, 43 (Wiesbaden: Reichert Verlag, 2019), 89–123. The music created by the bell around the dog's neck works like a drug, creating artificial happiness, and it is not at all the "ineffable d l'amour absolu" (122).

**337** Anna Sziráky, *Éros Lógos Musiké: Gottfrieds 'Tristan' oder eine utopische renovatio der Dichtersprache und der Welt aus dem Geiste der Minne und Musik?* *Wiener Arbeiten zur germanischen Altertumskunde und Philologie*, 38 (Bern, Berlin, et al.: Peter Lang, 2003), offers many interesting ideas regarding the philosophical meaning of music, but she does not specifically address the question of imagination vs. reality in the Petitcreiu scene.

Gilan also becomes a victim of Tristan's machinations and is equally left behind without any hope for happiness. However, whereas Isolde pursues her goal because she truly loves another person, Gilan had been nothing but the victim of self-deception and is thus completely destroyed at the end once the object of his imagination has been taken away. For him, the music was a perfect substitute for true love, whereas Isolde recognized the danger inherent in the musical intoxication and radically turned her back to the false promise. Petitcreiu is the product of illusion and by itself serves as a substitute for the real experience of love. Gilan is entirely subject to it, but Isolde recognizes the deception in time before she could fall for this music as well.<sup>338</sup>

In this regard, Gottfried outlines here an intricate structure of two levels, imagination and reality, and identifies the former as a danger to the lovers insofar as it intrudes, in the form of magic, into their true feelings for each other. The interaction between the factual and the imaginary thus proves to be highly intricate and a balancing act which Isolde, above all, decides on her own in a courageous manner because she is completely committed to her love and pursues her goal with the full force of her own agency.<sup>339</sup> She easily could have fallen for the incentive offered by Tristan to relax and to pursue temporary happiness as a form of delusion. Tristan is entirely attracted to and intrigued by the artistic aspect of the miraculous dog (color of the fur) and the soothing music produced by the bell around its neck. We might want to go so far and claim that in this case the artist in Tristan who enjoys creating illusions with language, performance, hunting, and fighting gets the better of him and robs him of the authenticity of his own feelings. Otherwise, he would not have offered the dog as a valid substitute for himself.<sup>340</sup>

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**338** Joan M. Ferrante, "'Ez ist ein zunge, dunket mich': Fiction, Deception and Self-Deception in Gottfried's *Tristan*," *Gottfried von Strassburg and the Medieval Tristan Legend* (see note 333), 171–80.

**339** Albrecht Classen, "Female Agency and Power in Gottfried von Strassburg's *Tristan*: The Irish Queen Isolde: New Perspectives," *Tristania* XXIII (2005): 39–60; id., "The Agency of Wives in High Medieval German Courtly Romances and Late Medieval Verse Narratives: From Hartmann von Aue to Heinrich Kaufringer," *Quidditas* 39 (2018): 25–53 (online at: <https://humanities.byu.edu/rmmra/pdfs/39.pdf>; last accessed on Feb. 18, 2020).

**340** For a first foray into this approach, see the contributions to *Visuality and Materiality in the Story of Tristan and Isolde*, ed. Jutta Eming, Jutta, Anne Marie Rasmussen, and Kathryn Starkey (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2012). The seminal study on this topic, however, is the one by W. T. H. Jackson, "Tristan the Artist in Gottfried's Poem," *Tristan and Isolde: A Casebook*, ed. Joan T. Grimbert (New York and London: Routledge, 2002; originally published in 1962), 125–46.

## *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*

Petitcreiu thus proved to be a great temptation to which Tristan basically falls prey, whereas Isolde rejects it, which indicates how much she begins to supersede her lover in intellectual and ethical terms. This also implies that according to Gottfried the two dimensions of the factual and the fictional closely interact with each other, often in competition, at other times in coordination. When we turn to the Middle English alliterative romance *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* (ca. 1370), we have more opportunities to fathom the complex relationships between the imaginary and the fictional.<sup>341</sup>

As much as King Arthur was the stuff of countless myths throughout the Middle Ages and until today, the Green Knight almost seems to overshadow him in his ferocious, uncanny, daunting, dazzling, and inexplicable features. He is the kind of protagonist who arrives in dreams and represents nightmares. He is not part of the courtly world and yet has arrived to challenge it in its ethical and knightly foundations. Of course, Arthur has basically waited for him since he did not want the festive dinner to start without “sum auenturus þyng, an vncouþe tale / Of sum mayn meruayle, þathe myzt trawe” (vv. 93–94). In other words, his cultural ideals require the appearance of the fanciful, or the imaginary, to be complete, and the Green Knights offers him just that option, as scary as he might appear at first sight.

The narrator goes so far as to call him a near monster (v. 140), superseding all knights in bodily shape and appearance. Even though he is green through and through, seemingly a creature from nature, he operates very much like a knight, commands all the common accessories of a knight, and yet challenges the entire court as was commonly the case in courtly literature. However, the narrator does not call him such, a knight; instead, he resorts to the term “gome” (v. 179); similarly, he describes the horse in terms of the otherworld, a beast never having been seen before (v. 197).

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<sup>341</sup> There are many good editions and translations available, such as *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, ed. and trans. by William Vantuono. Rev. ed. (1997; Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1999). For some recent scholarship, see J. A. Burrow, *A Reading of Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* (1965; London, Henley, and Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1977); *Critical Studies of Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, ed. Donald R. Howard and Christian Zacher (Notre Dame, IN, and London: University of Notre Dame Press, 1968); Ad Putter, *An Introduction to the Gawain-Poet*. Longman Medieval and Renaissance Library (London and New York: Longman, 1996); *A Companion to the Gawain-Poet*, ed. Derek Brewer and Jonathan Gibson. Arthurian Studies, 38 (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1997); Cecilia A. Hatt, *God and the Gawain-Poet: Theology and Genre in Pearl, Cleanness, Patience and Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2015).

The green man appears like a human being, and yet he is different. He could have originated from any courtly company, and yet he is devoid of any of the traditional knightly armor and weapons. He only carries a mighty ax in his hand, which is then used by Gawain to chop off his head, a monstrous deed, especially because the Green Knight survives, picks up his head, addresses the opponent, and then rides off, leaving Gawain with a challenge no man would really be capable of meeting, that is to submit himself under a decapitation procedure as part of a game – certainly a gross and unhuman idea never before expressed (except in Heinrich von dem Türlin's *Diu Crône*, end of thirteenth century).

The entire company of the Round Table is speechless and wonderstruck because they have never seen a green horseman like this. The narrator emphasizes that this creature falls outside of all of the common categories and finds no explanation or parallel: “For fele selye3 had þay sen, bot such neuere are” (v. 239). The entire company remains quiet, dazed by this fanciful phenomenon, also scared because of his fierce appearance and challenging presence on his green horse, until finally Arthur steps forward, welcomes him, and invites him to join their fellowship. However, the Green Knight refuses to accept the invitation, since he has come only to play a game and thus to challenge the entire court, the world of knighthood, “a Crystemas gomme” (v. 283).

But what game this is! Even the bravest of them all are shocked and refuse to respond because such a game would be impossible to survive, at least without the help of magic, as it later turns out to be. The Green Knight's proposition strikes everyone as preposterous and absurd, inviting one of them to gamble with his own life without any need, and this at Christmas time. Not surprisingly, he ridicules them, trying to provoke them to the extreme (vv. 308–15), and only when he bursts out laughing aloud in face of their obvious terror and fear (316),<sup>342</sup> King Arthur himself takes the courage, accepts the challenge, and is only then replaced by his nephew, Gawain, who indeed accepts the axe, swings it upon the opponent's neck, and chops off the head of the Green Knight, only to be told that he will have to submit himself to this procedure within a year's time. Did the poet create a kind of medieval nightmare? The entire account might suggest that, but within the medieval context we must always consider the central role of imagination and symbolism. To assume something like pure fantasy would be anachronistic for that world.

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<sup>342</sup> *Laughter in the Middle Ages and Early Modern Times: Epistemology of a Fundamental Human Behavior, Its Meaning, and Consequences*, ed. Albrecht Classen. *Fundamentals of Medieval and Early Modern Culture*, 5 (Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2010).

It cannot be the place here to review once again how this alliterative romance then proceeds, and we also do not need to discuss critically the overarching meaning of this text since many scholars have already offered a multitude of opinions and have shed much light on this intriguing and highly imaginative narrative.<sup>343</sup> As the conclusion reveals, the Green Knight only intended to test the resolve of King Arthur and his Round Table because Arthur's own sister, the infamous Morgan le Fay, in her envy and even hatred, intended to expose their alleged hypocrisy and pretense. She had provided the Green Knight, who is Bercilak de Hautdessert, with the magical power to survive the decapitation, and he was actually not supposed to kill Gawain in the scene at the Green Chapel. The entire game was nothing but a game, nearly deadly, but not murderous. When the Green Knight loses his head, this must have been the result of trickery and deception, so it was only a strategy to scare the opponent and possibly to expose his cowardice and fear.<sup>344</sup>

In a way, we might recognize here a literary precursor to the famous, infernal paintings by Hieronymus Bosch (see below), especially because the Green Knight seems so ghostly, scary, and outlandish, while being real and alive. But he is not a ghost, not a devil, not a spirit, but simply a very tall, strongly-built knight in a most scary appearance which allows him, especially with the help of the magical power given to him by Morgan, to perform as he does, to scare the knights of the Round Table out of their wits, and then to challenge Gawain in many different ways, including the sexual temptations by his own wife who operates on his behalf.

In fact, she might represent the greatest temptation for him because she uses her sexualized female body to seduce him. It remains entirely unclear how Gawain would have to return that 'favor' to the host as part of their wager, especially because he goes so far as to share with him at least the kiss that the lady had granted him during the early morning encounters. The audience is left to its own devices to imagine the possible consequences, but since Gawain demonstrates his moral and ethical steadfastness and does not fall for the

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**343** See, for instance, *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight: An Authoritative Translation, Contexts, Criticism*, trans. and ed. by Marie Borroff (New York: Norton, 2010); John M. Bowers, *An Introduction to the "Gawain" Poet. New Perspectives on Medieval Literature: Authors and Traditions* (Gainesville, Tallahassee, et al., FL: University Press of Florida, 2012); J. A. Burrow, *Gawain Poet. Writers and Their Work Series* (Tavistock, Devon: Liverpool University Press, 2018).

**344** See now Christa Agnes Tuczay, "Medieval Magicians as Entertainers: Magic as Demonic Illusion or Stagecraft," *Pleasure and Leisure in the Middle Ages*, ed. Albrecht Classen (2019; see note 64), 161–87. Cf. also eadem, "Magic and Divination," *Handbook of Medieval Culture: Fundamental Aspects and Conditions of the European Middle Ages*, ed. Albrecht Classen. Vol. 2 (Berlin and Boston: Walter de Gruyter, 2015), 937–53.

temptation, he can maintain his honor and will thus not be decapitated, although it is more than self-evident that he would have loved to accept the lady's invitations to sleep with her.

Of course, as we then learn from Bercilak, he had never really intended to kill his opponent; he only wanted, together with Morgan le Fay, to test King Arthur's and hence also 's resolve, that is, the world of the Round Table, which he regarded as a major challenge to the empire of magic and mystery. It was nothing but a "gomen," a game, but this game operated strongly on the basis of imagination, on interiority, fantasy, and projections, something what the pre-modern world certainly enjoyed tremendously.<sup>345</sup>

This becomes exceedingly clear when at the end a servant guides Gawain to the Green Chapel and then makes the astounding offer to keep it a secret to the entire world if the knight would simply turn away from his goal, avoid the terrible wager to be decapitated, and thus could preserve his life. This decapitation game is not a game which men should play with each other, though the blame would rest only on the Green Knight as the one who had initiated it. Gawain, however, rejects the servant's offer and insists on the absolute necessity for him as a knight that he keep his part of the bargain, otherwise he would lose his honor and would feel ashamed for the rest of his life. The poet underscores thereby most dramatically the huge impact which the mind has on the self, how much the self-concept matters for the own identity, as it would be an eternal shame and disgrace for Gawain to imagine for the rest of his life that he shirked his responsibility, broke his oath to the Green Knight, and thus shamed himself, in his mind, without anyone ever reproaching him officially or publicly.

The poet thus makes it crystal clear that the central component of all knighthood and chivalry rests in the person's heart and mind, and that fear for one's life in any situation would be the worst condition, leading to a quick decline of all courtly ideals and to the loss of the Arthurian ethics. The Christian ideals behind it all are only too clear to recognize, of course.<sup>346</sup> This set of values is not fantasy, not mere imagination; this is the foundation of all medieval ideals, at least for the nobility, to hold steady to its own principles, even at the risk of death. In other words, 'imagination' as a term needs to be further differentiated between mere fantasy and the profound concepts that guide people's behavior.

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<sup>345</sup> *Pleasure and Leisure in the Middle Ages* (2019; see note 64). See also Williams, *Middle English Marvels* (see note 216).

<sup>346</sup> Derek Brewer, "Romance Traditions and Christian Values in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*," *Christianity and Romance in Medieval England*, ed. Rosalind Field, Phillippa Hardman, and Michelle Sweeney. *Christianity and Culture. Issues in Teaching and Research* (Woodbridge, Suffolk: D. S. Brewer, 2010), 150–57.

Imagination here does not mean simply to project the force of the Green Knight as a deadly danger, but to conceive of an alternative challenge to all knighthood that could not be countered with any traditional, human means.<sup>347</sup>

The mind must be disciplined and trained, or all of life will fail, as Gawain experiences, and this on his own body, as the nick on his neck indicates. He had imagined that with the help of the belt he could survive the stroke with the axe, but that would have been an illusion. Only the Green Knight commands the magical power to pick up his head and place it on his own body again as if nothing had happened. Little wonder that the members of King Arthur's court react with horror at first, and then kick the head with their feet like a soccer ball, maybe as a form of comic relief that it was not their own. After all, no one can really understand what happened in the first decapitation scene.

In the second one, at the Green Chapel, Gawain just has to submit himself under the strike with the axe, but his own body does not understand it and does not want to die; hence his automatic reaction when he notices the shadow of the axe coming down onto him. But for Gawain, honor is more important than his life, so he holds steady the second time, and he survives, against his own hope and imagination, only to be told the secret strategy of testing his resolve and manliness. The Green Knight laughs in joy and jubilation, and would have liked to take Gawain back to his court for further celebrations, but the protagonist prefers to return to King Arthur's court where he reveals his own failure, as symbolized by the green belt.

Everyone rejoices when they see them again, and they are all deeply relieved that it all had been only a gruesome game orchestrated by Morgan le Fay and carried out by Bercilak. They all then decide to wear a green belt as well as a permanent and collective reminder of the imagined deadly encounter and of Gawain's bravery to submit himself under this terrifying test. The imaginary and symbolic holds firm sway here and demonstrates its significant impact on everyone at the Round Table. There is always the combination of illusion and projection, the fanciful and the dream world. The term 'imagination' thus proves to be rather complex and not easy to fathom, especially in this alliterative romance.

Much depends on the circumstances, of course. However, Gawain accepts without questioning the conditions for the decapitation wager and does not problematize the validity of the actual process which would leave him dead for sure if it had been real and serious. Knighthood versus magic is completely

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<sup>347</sup> For a range of different interpretations, see *A Companion to the Gawain-Poet*, ed. Derek Brewer (see note 341). See also Piotr Sadowski, *The Knight on His Quest: Symbolic Patterns of Transition in Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* (Newark, DE: University of Delaware Press, 1996).



uneven and unfair, which is the reason also why the entire Arthurian court reacts with such horror when they learn about the Green Knight's demands and conditions for his "gomen."<sup>348</sup>

## ***Mabinogi(on)***

In the more or less contemporary medieval Welsh *Mabinogion* (composed from the twelfth to the thirteenth centuries, recorded in the late fourteenth century) we encounter many features of magic, fantasy, and imagination, and our efforts to come to terms with this unusual collection of texts face serious challenges because there are virtually no Christian undertones or symbols to be detected, and yet much mysterious events take place challenging the protagonists and taking them onto new paths through their lives, always bringing to life profound aspects of ancient imagination. In these "Four Branches" the audience is exposed to various stories about mythical beings, magic, and superpowers beyond the human reach. It might be better, however, to talk about forces or magical individuals who come from the otherworld, invite the human characters to join them, and who provide them with their help and support.<sup>349</sup>

There are definite religious allusions, and perhaps a subtle Christian message was contained as well, but the narratives themselves represent a non-Christian pagan world where magic dominates. There is shape-shifting going on, sorcery is used, and there are specific exchanges between this and the world or other forces, both dark and alluring. As Sioned Davies emphasizes, "[d]espite the absence of a clear, overarching structure, there is within them a thematic unity that gives a

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**348** Corinne Saunders, "Magic and Christianity," *Christianity and Romance in Medieval England* (see note 346), 84–101, alerts us to the dubious, or rather ambiguous function of the green girdle which serves as a kind of apotropaic charm, and yet would not, in all likelihood, have protected Gawain from losing his head and dying in the scene at the Green Chapel. As Saunders underscores, "Gawain learns that he should have trusted not to magic but to God to preserve his life" (91).

**349** *The Mabinogi and Other Medieval Welsh Tales*, trans. and ed., with an intro. by Patrick K. Ford (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 2008); see also *The Mabinogion*, trans. with an intro. and notes by Sioned Davies. Oxford World Classics (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007). Andrew Breeze, *The Origins of the Four Branches of the Mabinogion* (Leominster: Gracewing, 2009), for the latest research, see now *The Cambridge History of Welsh Literature*, ed. Geraint Evans and Helen Fulton (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), especially the study by Diana Luft, "Commemorating the Past After 1066: Tales from *The Mabinogion*" (73–92).

consistency to the tales and suggests a single author working with traditional material to put forward a consistent view regarding appropriate moral behaviours.”<sup>350</sup>

Mysterious events take place, powerful forces make their presence felt, and struggles between peoples and individuals dominate the four branches. Imagination and fantasy, to reemphasize the overarching impression, are very much at play here, and although the narrative develops in a consistent manner, we are often left behind rather baffled because of the mysterious nature of things because miracles and wonders appear, but the full explanation for them is consistently withheld. Time and space operate quite differently, sexual relationships are played out that connect people from different spheres, marriages are concluded, but doom and gloom also take over at times, and magical powers that can prophecy the future are constantly at play.<sup>351</sup>

In the First Branch, for instance, Pwyll is told about a mysterious chair: “whatever nobleman sits on it will not leave there without one of two things happening: either he will be wounded or injured, or else he will see something wonderful” (8, trans. Davies). This is then the case, indeed, but the full explanation for the magic is withheld. Pwyll realizes that his men are not able to follow the mysterious lady, who moves in a different time mode and can never be reached, until he himself follows her and begs her to stop for him. The subsequent events prove to be highly complex, consisting of challenges, failures, gains and losses, and we find ourselves virtually in a world of fairy tales, of superstition, and ancient customs and beliefs.

In *Peredur son of Efrog*, for instance, to select at random one of many mysterious encounters, a lady tells the protagonist:

You are going to fight the monster, but it will kill you. And not because it is brave but because it is cunning. It lives in a cave, and there is a stone pillar at the mouth of the cave, and it can see everyone who enters but no one can see it. And with a poisonous stone spear from the shadow of the pillar it kills everyone. And if you promise to love me more than all women, I will give you a stone so that you will see the monster when you enter, but it will not see you (89).

And in *How Culhwch Won Olwen*, which might even predate the *Historia* by Geoffrey of Monmouth and certainly represents the earliest Arthurian tale in Welsh, we are informed about Cai’s magical abilities: “For nine nights and nine days he could hold his breath under water. For nine nights and nine days he could go without sleep. A wound from Cai’s sword no physician could heal. Cai

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350 Sioned Davies, “Introduction,” *The Mabinogion* (see note 349), xxv.

351 Mark Williams, “Magic and Marvels,” *The Cambridge History of Welsh Literature* (see note 349), 52–72; here 54.

was clever. He could be as tall as the tallest tree in the forest when it pleased him” (189). We can only agree with Helen Fulton when she talks about “fantasy and magic naturalism” in this context, because the poet projects supernatural heroes and connections with the Otherworld.<sup>352</sup>

There are many adventures which Arthur, above all, helping his cousin Culhwch to win his love Olwen, has to undergo, but suffice it here to underscore one more time how much these medieval poets, in Wales, in England, on the Continent, in Scandinavia, etc., happily endeavored to make room for the wide range of fantasies and creative imagination both within the pre- and the Christian world. The enchanted world of Celtic literature, medicine, magic, historiography, art, and wisdom, along with blacksmithing, prayers, and spells continues to appeal deeply to us today,<sup>353</sup> and we can recognize here a fascinating treasure trove of meaningfully embedded imagination and fantasy as the sources of an alternative world view created by very powerful and influential authors who commanded enough authority to present even highly improbable fantasy events as realistic and believable although no one had ever witnessed anything like that before.<sup>354</sup>

## ***Aucassin et Nicolette***

One of the more delightful late medieval narratives, half in verse, half in prose (‘prosimetrum’), *Aucassin et Nicolette* (middle of the thirteenth century), can ideally serve us to gain a better understanding of how fantasy and imagination operated in the literary context, that is, how the poet relied on both faculties in order to achieve the desired effect with the text or its presentation/performance.<sup>355</sup>

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<sup>352</sup> Helen Fulton, “Arthur and Merlin in Early Welsh Literature: Fantasy and Magic Naturalism,” *A Companion to Arthurian Literature*, ed. eadem. Blackwell Companions to Literature and Culture (Maldon, MA, Oxford, and Chister: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), 84–101; here 93.

<sup>353</sup> John Carey, *Magic, Metallurgy and Imagination in Medieval Ireland: Three Studies*. Celtic Studies Publications, XXI (Aberystwyth: Celtic Studies Publications; Havertown, PA: Casemate Academic, 2019).

<sup>354</sup> Sharon Paice MacLeod, *Celtic Cosmology and the Otherworld: Mythic Origins, Sovereignty and Liminality* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2018); see also her *Celtic Myth and Religion: A Study of Traditional Belief, with Newly Translated Prayers, Poems and Songs* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2012), and her *The Divine Feminine in Ancient Europe: Goddesses, Sacred Women and the Origins of Western Culture* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2014). There is, however, always a certain danger of utilizing this data for proto-religious purposes today.

<sup>355</sup> Roger Pensom, *Aucassin et Nicolette: The Poetry of Gender and Growing Up in the French Middle Ages* (Bern, Berlin, et al.: Peter Lang, 1999); Albrecht Classen, “Aucassin et Nicolette,”

Although the text was not really successful in the Middle Ages, having survived in only one manuscript (Bibliothèque Nationale français, ms. 2168), we have learned today to appreciate its value both in literary and cultural terms, and as a source for many different critical approaches, such as questions pertaining to courtly entertainment, slavery, gender and race issues, conflicts between a father and his son, the role of children, religious and economic class differences.<sup>356</sup> The poet explicitly plays on the imagined ideal that young people could choose on their own whom to love and marry (Aucassin's father is adamantly opposed to it), on the concept that love could transgress all racial and religious barriers, and on the dream of nature being a refuge from social constraints.

Here it will suffice to focus on one scene only, where the two lovers, having escaped from the court of Aucassin's father in order to be together with each other, reach the kingdom of Torelore. Nothing proves to be as expected according to the traditional social norms, and everything seems to be topsy-turvy as to gender roles, military strategies, political issues, and weapons. As we can be certain, the poet must have had fun with the development of his tale, performed half in prose, half in verse, obviously presented with musical accompaniment, deliberately predicated on ludic features that concede a certain degree of personal freedom.

In this episode, fantasy plays a major role since the situation in Torelore defies all norms and expectations and is the clear result of a rich fantasy (Land of Cockaigne), not finding any significant parallels in medieval European literature, perhaps with the exception of the Latin satirical song "Ego sum abbas Cucaniensis," contained in the *Carmina Burana* (early thirteenth century, perhaps ca. 1240), where the term of this imaginary land of plenty is even used explicitly to poke fun at monks and other clerics,<sup>357</sup> and possibly also with the

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*Encyclopedia of Medieval Literature*, ed. Jay Ruud (New York: Facts on File, 2005), 44–46; *Aucassin and Nicolette: A Facing-Page Edition and Translation* by Robert S. Sturges (East Lansing, MI: Michigan State University Press 2015); see also *Aucassin et Nicolette*, ed. critique. 2nd rev. and corrected ed. by Jean Dufournet (Paris: GF-Flammarion, 1984). See also *Aucassin et Nicolette*, trans. and photo-ill. by Katharine Margot Toohey (2017), online at: [https://quemarpress.weebly.com/uploads/8/6/1/4/86149566/aucassin\\_and\\_nicolette\\_-\\_translation\\_by\\_k.m.\\_toohey.pdf](https://quemarpress.weebly.com/uploads/8/6/1/4/86149566/aucassin_and_nicolette_-_translation_by_k.m._toohey.pdf); for further online links to older editions, see [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aucassin\\_and\\_Nicolette](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aucassin_and_Nicolette) (both last accessed on Feb. 18, 2020)

**356** June Hall Martin *Love's Fools: Aucassin, Troilus, Calisto and the Parody of the Courtly Lover*. Colección Tamesis, A, 21 (London: Tamesis Books, 1972); Barbara Sargent-Baur, *Aucassin et Nicolette: A Critical Bibliography*. Research Bibliography & Checklists, 35 (London: Grant & Cutler, 1981).

**357** *Carmina Burana. Texte und Übersetzungen*. Mit den Miniaturen aus der Handschrift und einem Aufsatz von Peter und Dorothee Diemer, ed. Benedikt Konrad Vollmann. Bibliothek des Mittelalters, 13 (Frankfurt a. M.: Deutscher Klassiker Verlag, 1987). See now also *Carmina Burana*,

exception of Wolfram von Eschenbach's account of the Grail in his *Parzival* (ca. 1205) which provides endless amounts of food and drink (809.15–810.1–9). Undoubtedly, both here and in many other instances we detect a strong sense of playfulness as a result of basic human fantasy, exciting humor, fun, and laughter about foolish situations that are obviously unreal.

But the love affair between Aucassin and Nicolette, the former the son of a cruel king, the latter a former Saracen slave girl, also proves to be highly unusual and does not conform with the standard norms. His father constantly lies to his son in order to make him fight against his own enemies, but then refuses to live up to his own promises as rewards for his military exploits, that is, to allow his son to enjoy Nicolette's love. This soon comes to a boiling point, the relationship breaks down, and eventually both Aucassin and Nicolette escape and roam the countryside far away from his home.

When they get to Torelore, the local king is lying in bed, pretending to be expecting a child. After a while, Aucassin gets so enraged that he beats on the king and forces him to abandon his pretense of being a pregnant woman (ch. 30). Once they get to the battle field, Aucassin attacks the enemies and slaughters them according to his own customs until the king holds him back, urging him not to kill the opponents: "Sire, dist li rois, trop en avés vos fait: il n'est mie costume que nos entrocions li uns l'autre" (ch. 32, 14–15; Sir, said the king, you are wrong in what you are doing; it is not my custom that we kill each other). This must have sounded absurd to medieval ears, especially by those whose daily business it was to slaughter their opponents and to accept the same destiny for themselves if they were unlucky. However, because of its transgressive nature, this scene provided obviously considerable entertainment for the audience and profiled a grotesque configuration everyone was supposed to be aware of. Medieval parody, the concrete outgrowth of imagination, was not unusual and enjoyed considerable popularity.<sup>358</sup>

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ed. and trans. David A. Traill. *Dumbarton Oaks Medieval Library* (Cambridge, MA, and London: Harvard University Press, 2018). See these recent studies: Sabina Tuzzo, *La poesia dei clerici vagantes: studi sui Carmina Burana*. Quaderni di Paideia, 18 (Cesena: Editrice Stilgraf, 2015); see also the contributions to *Parodie und Verkehrung: Formen und Funktionen spielerischer Verfremdung und spöttischer Verzerrung in Texten des Mittelalters und der Frühen Neuzeit*, ed. Seraina Plotke and Stefan Seeber. *Encomia Deutsch*, 3 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2016).

**358** Paul Edward Brians, "Medieval Literary Parody," Ph.D. diss. Indiana University, Bloomington 1968; "Parodia" and *Parodie: Aspekte intertextuellen Schreibens in der lateinischen Literatur der Frühen Neuzeit*, ed. Reinhold F. Gleis and Robert Seidel. *Frühe Neuzeit*, 120 (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer, 2006); *Fifteen Medieval Latin Parodies*, ed. Martha Bayless. *Toronto Medieval Latin Texts*, 35 (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 2018).

After all, the entire poem aims at simple entertainment and intended to make the audience laugh with delight over that caricature of knighthood and chivalry. The queen, for instance, is fighting on the battlefield instead of her husband, and there the troops do not use traditional weapons; instead, they throw food matter at each other which makes Aucassin smile at this scene (ch. 31). Nothing really makes sense, unless we recognize here the poet's intention to draw on traditional battle scenes and political conditions and to undermine them at the same time in a hilarious manner.

Fantasy and imagination prove to be the central operative techniques here, especially because food fights in the medieval context, when famines were never really that far away, not even from the nobility, did not make sense. However, the poet projects an extraordinary situation and suggests that the very opposite of a traditional war scene in which normally many soldiers are bound to die could be the case as well. The narrative itself thus emerges as the result of very productive literary fantasy through which the poet also manages to caricature courtly society and the world of knighthood.

Play with social conditions, switching of gender roles, hilarious transgressions of traditional expectations of the warrior class, and also the deliberate imagination that a love affair between a Christian prince and a Saracen lady might be a possibility even within the European context indicate strongly how much the poet intended to appeal to his/her audience to keep in mind that much of their value system was a construction that could be undermined or altered in a facetious manner.<sup>359</sup> Whatever the poet's intention might have been, the entire narrative reveals in a rather remarkable manner what alternative concepts of the courtly world could be conceived of or to what degree it could be transgressed in literary imagination.<sup>360</sup>

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**359** Research has approached this verse narrative from very different perspectives, but not yet as a delightful fantasy product. See, for instance, Emanuel Mickel Jr., "The Satirical Tradition in Aucassin et Nicolette," *Romance Philology* 62 (2008): 1–10; Véronique Dominguez, "Aucassin et Nicolette: une pièce de théâtre médiéval?," *Les pères du théâtre médiéval: examen critique de la constitution d'un savoir académique*, ed. Marie Bouhaïk-Gironès, Véronique Dominguez, Jelle H. Koopmans, and H. Jelle. Collection Interférences (Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2010), 213–31; Victoria C. Turner, "Medieval Expiration Paling? Queer Time and Spatial Dislocation in Aucassin et Nicolette," *Reconsidering Gender, Time and Memory in Medieval Culture*, ed. Elizabeth Cox, Liz Herbert McAvoy, and Roberta Magnani. Gender in the Middle Ages (Woodbridge, Suffolk: D. S. Brewer, 2015), 29–44; Claudio Galderisi, "La liturgie du combat dans Aucassin et Nicolette," *Armes et jeux militaires dans l'imaginaire XIIe–XVe siècles*, ed. Catalina Girbea. Bibliothèque d'histoire médiévale, 15 (Paris: Classiques Garnier, 2016), 295–314.

**360** See also the contribution to this volume by Fidel Fajardo-Acosta, who deals with the philosophical concept of nothingness in troubadour poetry. Already twelfth-century Provençal

In other words, *Aucassin et Nicolette* lives from the constant clash between social norm and deviation, from conflicts and tensions where normally, for instance, filial piety and submission would have been the norm. The father betrays his son repeatedly, breaking his promises; the prince loves a former slave girl; both elope, so to speak, leaving the court under mysterious circumstances and eventually meet each other again, but there is no pragmatic conclusion because the poet really plays with many options and allows his/her audience to imagine many alternatives.

## ***Apollonius of Tyre***

There are striking parallels in the employment of imagination and fantasy in the case of one of the best medieval 'bestsellers,' *Apollonius of Tyre*, which originated from a Greek or Latin source in the second or third century C.E. and was copied, translated, and adapted throughout the entire Middle Ages and well into the seventeenth century. The topic of the protagonist traveling in the Mediterranean area opened many narrative opportunities to fantasize about innovative literary strategies without being limited by the topic of the crusades or mercantile travel. In each case we observe the intriguing conflict between the rational evolution of the narrative and the possible alternatives.

Apollonius could have been able to convict the king of having committed incest with his daughter through solving the riddle; he could have stayed with his wife and enjoyed marital life with her; he could have checked whether she had actually died after having given birth to her daughter, Tarsia; he could have kept Tarsia with himself and lived a good life; thus he would not have exposed her to the kidnapping by the pirates; Tarsia could have failed to convince all her suitors in the brothel and would have lost her virginity and would not have attracted the love of the prince; she could have failed to uplift her father in the exchange of riddles, which would have ended the story right there, and father and daughter could have missed the harbor where his wife is serving as a priestess. But everything develops well, the imaginary path through the narrative web leads to a happy outcome, and all the evil characters are properly punished and executed.<sup>361</sup>

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poets, but then also Middle High German poets experimented with highly abstract notions such as nonsense or nothingness in order to add new dimensions to their poetic projections.

**361** Elizabeth Archibald, *Apollonius of Tyre: Medieval and Renaissance Themes and Variations: Including the text of the Historia Apollonii Regis Tyri with an English translation* (Woodbridge, Suffolk: Boydell & Brewer, 1991); cf. now also *Historia Apollonii regis Tyri: A Fourteenth-Century Version of a Late Antique Romance*. Ed. from Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, MS

However, *Apollonius of Tyre* works so well among the many different audiences throughout time, as documented through the enormous history of reception, because the many different options are only played out, but they do not lead to a quick and maybe for us unsatisfactory outcome, either catastrophic or with a happy end.

By the same token, if fantasy were not the critical tool at play, many of the major or minor medieval texts would not have achieved their prestige and popularity, serving many different purposes, some of which addressing the fundamental human need to experiment with all kinds of life situations within a fictional framework. Both *Aucassin et Nicolette* and *Apollonius of Tyre* are predicated on severe social, political, legal, emotional, moral, and religious problems, but the literary framework makes it possible to think through the consequences and thus to gain significant insight into various options available to solve ordinary issues in everyday life.

## Mappaemundi

As mentioned before, the genre of medieval and early modern maps also invites a critical reading of concepts about the world in the local and the global context. As much as the creators of those maps made many efforts to offer an ‘exact’ projection of the physical dimension of the earth, much depended on their actual knowledge and their imagination.<sup>362</sup> Even if the geophysical dimensions of

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Vaticanus Latinus 1961, by William Robins. Toronto Medieval Latin Texts, 36 (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 2019) for a fifteenth-century German version, see Tina Terrahe, Heinrich Steinhöwels ‘Apollonius’: Edition und Studien. Frühe Neuzeit, 179 (Berlin and Boston: Walter de Gruyter, 2013); Stelios Panayotakis, *The Story of Apollonius, King of Tyre: A Commentary*. Texte und Kommentare, 38 (Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2012); cf. also Albrecht Classen, “Reading and Deciphering in *Apollonius of Tyre* and the *Historia von den sieben weisen Meistern*: Medieval Epistemology within a Literary Context,” *Studi Medievali* 49 (2008): 161–88. See also John Hunt, “Readings in *Apollonius of Tyre*,” *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology* 99 (1999): 341–55; S. Panayotakis, “The Temple and the Brothel: Mothers and Daughters in ‘Apollonius of Tyre,’” *Space in the Ancient Novel*, ed. M. Paschalis, and S. Frangoulidis. Ancient Narrative Supplementum, 1 (Havertown, PA: Barkhuis, 2002), 98–117.

**362** Evelyn Edson, Emilie Savage-Smith, and Anna-Dorothee von den Brincken, *Der mittelalterliche Kosmos: Karten der christlichen und islamischen Welt* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2005); Monika Schuol, “Imaginationen: Die Tabula Peutingeriana,” *Zeitschrift für Bibliothekswesen und Bibliographie* 65.5/6 (2018): 246–58; P. D. A. Harvey, *Medieval Maps* (London: British Library, 1991); Naomi Reed Kline, *Maps of Medieval Thought: The Hereford Paradigm* (Woodbridge, Suffolk: Boydell, 2001); *The Hereford World Map: Medieval World Maps and Their Context*, ed. P. D. A. Harvey (London: British Library, 2006).



Europe and, to some extent, the neighboring continents were depicted more or less correctly, imagination and fantasy still dominated for a long time.<sup>363</sup>

Time and space, bound together in a unique chronotope (Bakhtin), were projected on a physical plane which reflected both reality and imagination, especially as far as religious experiences for pilgrims were concerned.<sup>364</sup> It often seems difficult to distinguish between fact and fiction here, but this constituted not a real problem for people in the pre-modern world because they did not necessarily rely on those maps for their concrete, on the ground orientation while traveling. Both the huge size of the *mappaemundi* and the global scope would have automatically prevented that. The famous maps that have survived since the early Middle Ages were representative pieces, exhibited or displayed in festive contexts, and were certainly not used for the actual travel.<sup>365</sup> Some of

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See also Anna-Dorothee von den Brincken, “‘... ut describeretur universus orbis’: zur Universalkartographie des Mittelalters,” *Methoden in Wissenschaft und Kunst des Mittelalters*, ed. Albert Zimmermann (Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1970), 249–78; Peter Barber, “Medieval Maps of the World,” *The Hereford Map: Medieval World Maps and Their Context*, ed. Paul Harvey (London: The British Library, 2006), 1–44; Evelyn Edson, *The World Map, 1300–1492: The Persistence of Tradition and Transformation* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2007); *Maps and Travel in the Middle Ages and the Early Modern Period: Knowledge, Imagination, and Visual Culture*, ed. Ingrid Baumgärtner, Nirit Ben-Aryeh Debby, and Katrin Krogman-Apel. *Das Mittelalter: Perspektiven mediävistischer Forschung*, Beihefte, 9 (Berlin and Boston: Walter de Gruyter, 2019)

**363** Asa Simon Mittman, *Maps and Monsters in Medieval England*. *Studies in Medieval History and Culture* (New York and London: Routledge, 2006).

**364** Daniel K. Connolly, *The Maps of Matthew Paris: Medieval Journeys Through Space, Time and Liturgy* (Woodbridge, Suffolk: The Boydell Press, 2009); see also Evelyn Edson, “World Maps and Easter Tables: Medieval Maps in Context,” *Imago Mundi* 48 (1996): 25–42; Jeffrey Jaynes, *Christianity Beyond Christendom: The Global Christian Experience on Medieval “Mappaemundi” and Early Modern World Maps*. *Wolfenbütteler Forschungen*, 149 (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2018). Other important studies are: John Block Friedman, *The Monstrous Races in Medieval Art and Thought* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1981); Asa S. Mittman, *Maps and Monsters in Medieval England*. *Studies in Medieval History and Culture* (New York and London: Routledge, 2016); Chet A. van Duzer, *Sea Monsters on Medieval and Renaissance Maps* (London: The British Library, 2013); id., “Bring on the Monsters and Marvels: Non-Ptolemaic Legends on Manuscript Maps of Ptolemy’s Geography,” *Viator* 45 (2014): 303–34.

**365** See, for instance, Sandra Saenz-Lopez Peres, *The Beatus Maps: The Revelation of the World in the Middle Ages* (Burgos: Siloé, 2014); Felicitas Schmieder, “‘Here many Saracen pilgrims wander to Mecca’ – On the Role of Pilgrimage, Shrines and Worshipping on Latin European Medieval World Maps (*mappae mundi*),” *Unterwegs im Namen der Religion II/On the Road in the Name of Religion II. Wege und Ziele in vergleichender Perspektive – das mittelalterliche Europa und Asien/Ways and Destinations in Comparative Perspective – Medieval Europe and Asia*, ed. Klaus Herbers and Hans-Christian Lehner (Stuttgart: Steiner, 2016), 13–27.

them were certainly scientifically developed, but the fictional character remained a major feature because they were mostly graphic depictions of the world as outlined by the many travelogues, including those by John Mandeville.<sup>366</sup>

We could also say that *Mappaemundi* were visual representations of geographical knowledge, learned tradition, religion, fantasy, and imagination in a most syncretizing sense, almost something like a medieval *Gesamtkunstwerk*. As an alternative, Felicitas Schmieder has coined the useful phrase of “Geographies of Salvation,” emphasizing the huge role which those maps played for the imaginary projections concerning the division of this world according to the distribution of the various religions.<sup>367</sup> However, contrary to scientific geographies, both then and today, those *mappaemundi* represented not the geographic reality, which the artists could not reproduce anyway, but the mental concept of the globe as it was supposed to be according to the learned tradition.

Comparing early medieval maps with those from the late Middle Ages and beyond reveals, of course, a progressive transformation of those *mappaemundi* from mirrors of fanciful imagination in very rough terms to concrete geophysical outlines of the world in impressive detail.<sup>368</sup> However, those maps did not necessarily get better or more precise, but they changed in their function and transformed from a symbolic representation of the world as imagined in spiritual terms to increasingly factual data carriers.

After all, it would not make sense to consider the early maps as geographical guides for merchants or pilgrims, who must have been able to orient themselves in different ways. Those who created the *Hereford Map* or the *Ebstorfer Weltkarte*, normally, as far as we can tell, members of the clergy, aimed at spiritual-visual reflections about the world, not at providing a concise and real depiction of the physical reality, even if the rough outlines of the various parts of the world are still recognizable to some extent.<sup>369</sup>

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**366** See, for instance, Daniel Lord Smail, *Imaginary Cartographies: Possessions and Identity in Late Medieval Marseille*. ACLS Fellows' Publications (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2000); Autumn M. Muir, “The Psalter Mappaemundi: Medieval Maps Enabling Ascension of the Soul Within Christian Devotional Practices,” M.A. thesis, Bowling Green State University, 2011; online at: [https://etd.ohiolink.edu/!etd.send\\_file?accession=bgsu1300733958&disposition=inline](https://etd.ohiolink.edu/!etd.send_file?accession=bgsu1300733958&disposition=inline) (last accessed on Feb. 18, 2020).

**367** Felicitas Schmieder, “Geographies of Salvation: How to Read Medieval Mappae Mundi,” *Peregrinations. Journal of Medieval Art and Architecture* VI.3 (2018): 21–42.

**368** Ute Schneider, *Die Macht der Karten: eine Geschichte der Kartographie vom Mittelalter bis heute*. 4th rev. and expanded ed. (2004; Darmstadt: Theiss, 2018).

**369** Scott D. Westrem, *The Hereford Map: A Transcription and Translation of the Legends with Commentary*. *Terrarum orbis*, 1 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2001); *The Hereford World Map: Medieval World Maps and Their Context*, ed. P. D. A. Harvey (London: British Library, 2006). Jürgen

Just as in the case of Hildegard of Bingen's cosmic vision, the *Ebstorf Map* is framed by the figure of Christ, with Jerusalem in the center. The map had been supposed to be hung on a wall, and could thus have served as a pictorial work for religious devotion, here combined with a lot of geographical details. However, Hartmut Kugler warns us to see in this *mappamundi* an altar piece because that would have led to heretical speculations. Instead, the spectator was obviously invited to combine the factual with the imaginary, admiring the miracles of this world and contemplating the all-encompassing *Imago Dei* portrayed in the geophysical extension from the most western parts of Europe to the most eastern parts of Asia – the Americas, southern Africa, and Australia being continents not yet discovered at that time.<sup>370</sup>

The number of text passages, specific geographical identifying markers, and also images of all kinds of creatures, including monsters, is staggering, and yet, this is not a detailed atlas *avant la lettre*. Instead, the spectator was supposed to use all this material for his/her introspection, to offer devotional prayers to Christ, and to embrace the infinite wealth of beings in this world, all created by God.<sup>371</sup> Insofar we have, with these *mappaemundi*, perfect examples

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Wilke, *Die Ebstorfer Weltkarte*. 2 vols. Veröffentlichungen des Instituts für historische Landesforschung der Universität Göttingen, 39 (Bielefeld: Verlag für Regionalgeschichte, 2001). Cf. now *Die Ebstorfer Weltkarte*, kommentierte Neuausgabe in zwei Bänden, ed. Hartmut Kugler, together with Sonja Glauch and Antje Willing (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 2007); Beat Wolf, *Jerusalem und Rom: Mitte, Nabel – Zentrum, Haupt: die Metaphern "Umbilicus mundi" und "Caput mundi" in den Weltbildern der Antike und des Abendlandes bis in die Zeit der Ebstorfer Weltkarte* (Bern, Berlin, et al.: Peter Lang, 2010).

**370** Hartmut Kugler, *Die Ebstorfer Weltkarte* (see note 369), vol. II: *Untersuchungen und Kommentar*, 19–21.

**371** Kugler, *Die Ebstorfer Weltkarte* (see note 369), vol. I: *Atlas*, uses this term, 'atlas,' and yet identifies it as a "Demonstrationsfeld von Geschichte. Zugleich ist die Karte ein Andachtsbild ... Die Karte bildet Weltanschauung ab, sie ist im buchstäblichen wie im übertragenen Sinn des Wortes ein Weltbild" (3; display of history. At the same time the map is a devotional picture ... The map represents a worldview; it is, literally and metaphorically, a world image). See now also Julia Mia Stirnemann, *Über Projektionen: Weltkarten und Weltanschauungen, von der Rekonstruktion zur Dekonstruktion, von der Konvention zur Alternative*. Image, 147 (Bielefeld: transcript, 2018). She correctly identifies the medieval world maps as distinctly removed from the ancient maps because their creators intended to reflect a Christian, hence a religious, worldview, or to reproduce what God had intended to make out of this world (68). And: "Durch die in *Mappaemundi* angewandte Darstellungsweise können thematische, zeitliche und räumliche Verstehensebenen gleichzeitig angesprochen werden. Dafür werden Bildzeichen mit verschiedenen Bildsignaturen, Texten und Kommentaren in Zusammenhang gestellt, woraus sich kulturelle Erzähl- und Erinnerungsräume formen" (69; By means of the mode of presentation applied in the *Mappaemundi*, thematic, temporal, and spatial levels of comprehension can be addressed simultaneously. To achieve that goal, iconic signals are placed within a correlation connection picture signatures, texts, and

for the relevance of imagination even within the genre of highly detailed, seemingly scientifically developed world maps. In reality, as is often the case, here we encounter a most intriguing strategy to utilize the impression of physical reality presented on this huge parchment tableau in order to lead the spectator to the world of religious imagination and back again to his/her concrete reality. In a way, the difference between an Arthurian or courtly romance and these world maps was only limited in terms of genre, but not in terms of the relationship between imagination and physical perception.

The Ebstorf world map is hence certainly not a product of sheer fantasy, but the output of serious learning here brought to bear for spiritual devotion. The more the spectator can recognize specific areas, locations, towns, roads, rivers, seas, and the like, the more s/he is also asked to reflect upon God's greatness mirrored in this projection of the world, His own creation. In short, wherever we look, we regularly observe that pre-modern artists and writers engaged with the transcendental, and incorporated numerous keys into their works that allow the observer/viewer to gain insight into the imagination, or fantasy, here now understood in a spiritual way.

## The Myth and Legend of Melusine

To draw from another specific example from the pre-modern world, medieval and early modern accounts of the Melusine figure abound everywhere, and her appearance in sculptures, paintings, and texts is ubiquitous.<sup>372</sup> As it turns out

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commentaries, which then form cultural narrative and memory spaces). See also F. Farinelli, "The Power, the Map, and Graphic Semiotics: The Origin," *Projektion, Reflexion, Ferne räumliche Vorstellungen und Denkfiguren im Mittelalter*, ed. Sonja Glauch, Susanne Köbele, and Uta Strömer-Caysa (Berlin and Boston: Walter de Gruyter, 2011), 335–53; cf. also Nikolaus Andreas Egel, *Die Welt im Übergang: der diskursive, subjektive und skeptische Charakter der 'Mappamondo' des Fra Mauro*. Beiträge zur Philosophie: Neue Folge (Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag Winter, 2014), 67; Emanuela Casti, *Reality as Representation: The Semiotics of Cartography and the Generation of Meaning*. Edizioni sestante (1998; Bergamo University Press, 2000); eadem, *Reflexive Cartography: A New Perspective in Mapping*. Modern Cartography, 6 (Amsterdam: Elsevier, 2015).

<sup>372</sup> See also my contribution to this volume where I also include a number of other hybrid women characters in western literature. But this phenomenon was certainly not limited to the Western world; rather, here we encounter a universal 'archetype.' See now *The Supernatural Revamped: From Timeworn Legends to Twenty-First-Century Chic*, ed. Barbara Brodman and James E. Doan (Madison: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2017). As to ghosts in medieval and early modern imagination, see the contributions to this volume by John Pizer and Emmy

at the end, in all of the various literary accounts from throughout Europe, she is a hybrid creature because she had broken, together with her two sisters, a taboo and was consequently punished by their mother, Persine from Awelon (Avalon), being forced to retire into the world of fairies. Although she later has a chance to return to humankind through the marriage with her husband Reymund, the latter also transgresses the taboo that she herself had imposed on him, which forces her to leave this world and to transform back into a fairy or nixie.<sup>373</sup>

Despite all the happiness during her married life, during which she delivers many children and establishes a whole dynasty, deep tragedy permeates her existence, which would be a very close parallel to Unamuno's approach to imagination and the literary discourse. Did people really believe in her existence? How did the Church view this curious character, so deeply associated with water as a mythical source? The vast popularity of this myth, both in material and visual terms, including the many literary reflections in early modern novels, unequivocally underscores the extent to which fantasy and imagination connected with mythical creatures exerted their influence on popular culture throughout the entire pre-modern period, as exceedingly well mirrored through Melusine's story.<sup>374</sup>

At the very moment when the great myth-maker, the Catholic Church, lost much of its influence to the Protestant Church since 1517, when new major discoveries were made, when a paradigm shift was imminent around 1500 in general,<sup>375</sup> the late medieval and early modern audience rediscovered an old medieval fantasy and adopted it for many different purposes, as reading material, as interior decoration ("Lüsternweibchen"), as sculpture, painting, and

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Herland. As to fairy-like creatures in Arabic literature, genies, see the contribution to this volume by Jessica Zeitler.

**373** For a useful blogsite covering all kinds of fairies and nixies, providing background and summaries, see <https://fantastic-beasts.blogs.uni-hamburg.de/monstroese-genealogie-in-der-melusine-bei-thuering-von-ringoltingen/> (last accessed on Feb. 18, 2020).

**374** In my contribution to this volume, I examine this phenomenon more in detail; see also my recent monograph, *Water in Medieval Literature: An Ecocritical Reading*. Ecocritical Theory and Practice (Lanham, MD, Boulder, CO, et al.: Lexington Books, 2018). See further Bruno Quast, "'Diß kommt von gelückes zuoualle': Entzauberung und Remythisierung in der 'Melusine' des Thüring von Ringoltingen," *Präsenz des Mythos: Konfigurationen einer Denkform im Mittelalter und Früher Neuzeit*, ed. Udo Friedrich. Trends in Medieval Philology, 2 (Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2004), 83–96.

**375** See now the contributions to *Paradigm Shifts During the Global Middle Ages and the Renaissance*, ed. Albrecht Classen. Arizona Studies in the Middle Ages and Renaissance, 44 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2019).

heraldic sign, obviously deeply intrigued by this mysterious figure who helped to bridge the gulf between people, or human culture, and nature/water.<sup>376</sup>

## Hieronymus Bosch – Fantasy and Imagination in Late Medieval Art

We could easily turn to countless art objects from the Middle Ages to explore the meaning of imagination and fantasy further, but here I prefer to examine briefly the work by a major late medieval artist, Hieronymus Bosch (ca. 1450–1516), particularly because he explored, more than most others, new dimensions in his paintings that do not only mirror the imaginary and fantastic, but almost seem to go beyond all traditional limits, forcing us as spectators to question deeply the meaning and relevance of the artistic approach to the other dimension and to discover the enormous potentials of human imagination as reflected in medieval art.<sup>377</sup> Bosch created images of a deeply religious nature (Genesis, Hell), obviously in conformity with the requests from his patrons. Nevertheless, wherever we look, we discover highly individualistic imaginary elements that entail new narratives which the spectator has to pursue him/herself upon closer examination, taking us deeply into fantastic worlds of a most creative kind.

Research has already engaged with Bosch in many different fashions, but here I want to draw only from him for the purpose of revealing the extent to which he famously explored the fantastic, the imaginary, the visionary.<sup>378</sup> Obviously, it

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**376** Albrecht Classen, “The Melusine Figure in Fifteenth- and Sixteenth-Century German Literature and Art: Cultural-Historical Information Within the Pictorial Program. With a Discussion of the Melusine-Lüsterweibchen Connection,” *Melusine’s Footprint: Tracing the Legacy of a Medieval Myth*, ed. Misty Urban, Deva F. Kemmis, and Melissa Ridley Elmes. Explorations in Medieval Culture, 4 (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2017), 74–94.

**377** For a biography, see now Monique Van Schoute-Verboonen, “Biography of Bosch,” Carmen Garrido and Roger Van Schoute, *Bosch at the Museo del Prado* (Madrid: Museo del Prado, 2001), 205–10. There are, of course, countless entries on Bosch online. For late medieval art at large, as relevant for our investigations, see Norbert Schneider, *Von Bosch zu Bruegel: niederländische Malerei im Zeitalter von Humanismus und Reformation*. Karlsruher Schriften zur Kunstgeschichte, 10 (Berlin: Lit, 2015).

**378** See, for instance, Charles de Tolnay, *Hoeronymus Bosch* (1965; n.l.: Reynal & Company, in association with William Morrow & Company, 1966); R.-H. Marijnissen, K. Blockx, P. Gerach, H.-T. Piron, J.-H. Plokker, and V. H. Bauer, *Jhyronimus Bosch* (Geneva: Weber, 1972); Walter S. Gibson, *Hieronymus Bosch. The World of Art Library: Artists* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1973); Wilhelm Fraenger, *Hieronymus Bosch* (Dresden: VEB Verlag der Kunst, 1975); here I have consulted the English translation by Helen Sebba (New York: G. P. Putnam’s Sons, 1975).

would not be possible here to review the rich corpus of relevant scholarship, and even a fairly naive approach to Bosch's work, simply describing the various elements, would not do justice to his accomplishments because the interpretations diverge considerably, ranging from suggesting that his paintings were orthodox theological to whimsical and imaginative.

Are we supposed to get deeply frightened about the ultimate consequences of our sinfulness, or does Bosch invite us to laugh with him about the many types of hybridization that populate his canvases.<sup>379</sup> There are very good reasons to feel horrified and frightened, but at the same time the artist created canvases

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Fraenger sees in Bosch a heretic who hid behind his artistic projections. Wolfgang Wintermeier, *Hieronymus Bosch* (Hildesheim: Gerstenberg, 1983); Roger H. Marijnissen, *Hieronymus Bosch: das vollständige Werk*, trans. from the Dutch (Weinheim: Acta Humaniora, 1988); Hans Holländer, *Hieronymus Bosch: Weltbilder und Traumwerk*. 3rd updated and expanded ed. DuMont-Taschenbücher, 28 (Cologne: DuMont, 1988); Hans Belting, *Hieronymus Bosch: Garten der Lüste* (Munich, Berlin, et al.: Prestel, 2002); Stefan Fischer, *Hieronymus Bosch: Malerei als Vision, Lehrbild und Kunstwerk*. Atlas – Bonner Beiträge zur Kunstgeschichte, Neue Folge, 6 (Cologne, Weimar, and Vienna: Böhlau, 2009); Reindert Falkenburg, *The Land of Unlikeness: Hieronymus Bosch, The Garden of Earthly Delights*. Studies in Netherlandish Art and Cultural History, 10 (Zwolle, Netherlands: W Books, 2011); Matthijs IJssink, *Hieronymus Bosch, Painter and Draughtsman: Catalogue raisonné* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2016). For this far-reaching compilation with many new, though not always convincing observations and arguments, see the review by Peter Dinzelsbacher in *Mediaevistik* 33, forthcoming. Debra Higgs Strickland, *The Epiphany of Hieronymus Bosch: Imagining Antichrist and Others from the Middle Ages to the Reformation* (London: Harvey Miller Publishers, 2016); Joseph Leo Koerner, *Bosch & Bruegel: From Enemy Painting to Everyday Life* (Princeton, NJ, and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2018). The literature on Bosch is legion by now, and this for obvious reasons. He was not only a brilliant painter, but his paintings stand out also because of their puzzling ambiguity, complexity, quixotic elements, hybridity, and shockingly imaginative strategies and creativity that continue to appeal to ever new generations.

379 Guido Boulboullé, "Groteske Angst: Die Höllenphantasien des Hieronymus Bosch," *Glaubensstreit und Gelächter: Reformation und Lachkultur im Mittelalter und in der Frühen Neuzeit*, ed. Christoph Auffarth and Sonja Kerth (Berlin: LIT Verlag, 2008), 55–78; see also Lynn Jacobs, "The Triptychs of Hieronymus Bosch," *The Sixteenth Century Journal* 31.4 (2000): 1009–41; Peter Glum, *The Key to Bosch's 'Garden of Earthly Delights' Found in Allegorical Bible Interpretation*. 2 vols. (Tokyo: Chuo-Koron Bijutsu Shuppan Pub., 2007); Enrico Malizia, *Hieronymus Bosch. Insigne pittore nel crepuscolo del medio evo. Stregoneria, magia, alchimia, simbolismo* (Rome: Youcanprint Ed., 2015); Matthijs IJssink, Jos Koldeweij, Jon Spronk, et al., *Hieronymus Bosch: Painter and Draughtsman/Jheronimus Bosch – schilder en tekenaar – Catalogue raisonné* (Brussels: Mercatorfonds; New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2016); D. H. Strickland, *The Epiphany of Hieronymus Bosch. Imagining Antichrist and Others from the Middle Ages to the Reformation*. Studies in Medieval and Early Renaissance Art History (Turnhout: Harvey Miller, 2016); most recently, see Till-Holger Borchert, *Bosch: Meisterwerke im Detail* (Cologne: Verlag Bernd Detsch, 2019).

that simply teem with imaginary features, elements, and figures that seem extraordinarily outlandish and unreal, as much as religious, biblical messages can be identified behind many scenes. As much as Bosch followed the orthodox teachings of the Church about the apocalypse, for instance, as much did he also enjoy or simply use the freedom to give his fantasies free reign. Here we encounter an artist who delighted in presenting his world as topsy-turvy, having transgressed all norms, and being populated by bizarre, grotesque, macabre, and highly ingenious creatures, at least in hell.<sup>380</sup>

For our intentions, just a few comments about curious elements or details presented by the artist will have to suffice to draw some important insights into the domain of imagination and fantasy as they were perceivable and possible in the late Middle Ages. Most interesting for our interests proves to be Bosch's famous "The Garden of Earthly Delights," today kept in the Museo del Prado, Madrid, painted between 1490 and 1510, which is quite parallel to his other triptychs, "The Last Judgment" of ca. 1482, and "The Haywain Triptych" of ca. 1516.<sup>381</sup> As much as Bosch, in accordance with his charge, depicted the various stages of human history, from paradise to hell, and as much as we must read the triptych deeply influenced and determined by the biblical account, as scholarship has pointed out already in many ways, as much we face here also a great opportunity to detect a wide range of images that were the outgrowth of Bosch's personal fantasy.

While most elements could be read in light of specific theological symbolism, there are also many dimensions of individual imagination, a phenomenon which finds interesting parallels with the vast range of medieval gargoyles and corbels at churches and cathedrals all over late medieval Europe that certainly mirror the teachings of the Church about sinfulness, demons, and the horror of hell, but simultaneously reflect a highly meaningful fascination with the bizarre, the grotesque, in short, human fantasy.<sup>382</sup> As recent scholars have increasingly emphasized, here we face a deliberately bizarre, grotesque, maybe

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**380** *Verkehrte Welt: das Jahrhundert von Hieronymus Bosch*, ed. Michael Philipp, and Kathrin Baumstark (Munich: Hirmer, 2016). This is a catalog accompanying an exhibition in Hamburg, June 4 to September 11, 2016.

**381** Despite much criticism of Wikipedia, the article on Bosch's painting proves to be excellently researched, clearly structured, and highly informative, providing first-rate visual material: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The\\_Garden\\_of\\_Earthly\\_Delights](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Garden_of_Earthly_Delights) (last accessed on Feb. 18, 2020).

**382** Albrecht Classen, "Gargoyles – Wasserspeier," Ulrich Müller and Werner Wunderlich, Hgg.: *Dämonen, Monster, Fabelwesen. Mittelalter Mythen*, 2 (St. Gall: UVK, 1999), 127–33.



paradox epistemology subtly at play.<sup>383</sup> Similarly, the countless depictions of monsters on *mappaemundi*, in frescoes, in manuscript illustrations, and so forth remind us that medieval audiences were already greatly interested in the fantastic, the outlandish, the fanciful, hence imaginary creatures. What Bosch was doing represents, hence, only a highly creative continuation of old medieval traditions, subsuming it all, of course, under the umbrella of religious teachings about hell, purgatory, and heaven, just as Dante had developed it so powerfully in his *Divina Commedia*.<sup>384</sup> Nevertheless, the degree to which fantasy and imagination are allowed to enter the traditional framework proves to be most remarkable.

We also must not ignore the many stunning depictions of the Day of Judgment in countless medieval tympana and especially in large frescoes, such as the art work in the Collegiata Church in San Gimignano, Giotto's paintings in the Scrovegni Chapel in Padua,<sup>385</sup> or those in the cathedral of Albi (see Fig. 4),<sup>386</sup> not to forget Michaelangelo's *Last Judgment* in the Sistine Chapel, Vatican (1536–1541), for example.<sup>387</sup>

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**383** Nurith Kenaan-Kedar, *Marginal Sculpture in Medieval France: Towards the Deciphering of an Enigmatic Pictorial Language* (Aldershot: Scholar Press, 1995); Kirk Ambrose, *The Marvelous and the Monstrous in the Sculpture of Twelfth-Century Europe*. Boydell Studies in Medieval Art and Architecture (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2013).

**384** Dorothea Scholl, "Dante und das Groteske," *Deutsches Dante-Jahrbuch* 77 (2002): 73–105; Alison Milbank, "Divine Beauty and the Grotesque in Dante's Paradiso," *Yearbook of English Studies* 39.1–2 (2009): 155–68; see also Lupu Mircea-Ioan, "Grotesque as Aesthetic Identity: From Medieval Illumination to Contemporary Art," *EIRP Proceedings* 8.1 (2013): 263–78.

**385** Laura Jacobus, *Giotto and the Arena Chapel: Art, Architecture & Experience* (London: Miller, 2008); see also the contributions to *Giotto: The Frescoes of the Scrovegni Chapel in Padua*, ed. Giuseppe Basile (Milan: Skira, 2002); Anne Derbes and Mark Sandona, *The Usurer's Heart: Giotto, Enrico Scrovegni, and the Arena Chapel in Padua* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2008).

**386** Martin Zlatohlávek, *Das Jüngste Gericht: Fresken, Bilder und Gemälde*, trans. from the Czech by Jürgen Ostmeier (Düsseldorf and Zürich: Benziger, 2001); Ottmar Fuchs, *Das Jüngste Gericht: Hoffnung auf Gerechtigkeit* (Regensburg: Pustet, 2007). For Albi itself, see A. Auriol, "Les fresques de la chapelle Sainte-Croix à Sainte-Cécile d'Albi," *Annales du Midi* 36/143–44 (1924): 418–56; Claude Jean-Nesmy, *Albi: La cathédrale et l'histoire, le décor sculpté et peint* (St. Leger Vauban: Zodiaque, 1976); Jean-Louis Biget, *Sainte-Cécile d'Albi: Peintures* (1994; Toulouse: Editions Odyssée, 1997); id., *Sainte-Cécile d'Albi: 500e anniversaire des peintures de la voûte, 1509–2009* (Graulhet: Éd. Odyssée, 2009).

**387** Robin Richmond, *Michelangelo & the Creation of the Sistine Chapel* (London: Barrie & Jenkins, 1992); Bernadine Barnes, "Metaphorical Painting: Michelangelo, Dante, and the Last Judgment," *Art Bulletin* 77 (1995): 64–81; Marcia B. Hall, *Michelangelo: The Frescoes of the Sistine Chapel* (New York: Abrams, 2002); *Michelangelos's Last Judgment*, ed. Marcia B. Hall. Masterpieces of Western Painting (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005); Anne



**Fig. 4:** Day of Judgment; St. Cécile, Albi, southern France, fifteenth century, Day of Judgment (public domain)

## Interlude I: The Grotesque, the Bizarre, and the Monstrous in Medieval Art

Medieval and early modern imagination was very rich, diverse, and highly creative, particularly when it was channeled to meet theological purposes aiming at educating and disciplining the laity by means of hope and fear.<sup>388</sup> It might

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Leader, “Michelangelo’s Last Judgment: The Culmination of Papal Propaganda in the Sistine Chapel,” *Studies in Iconography* 27 (2006): 103–56.

**388** Peter Dinzelbacher, *Angst im Mittelalter* (see note 246), strongly argued for this thesis. Indeed, the medieval faithful who entered a Christian church regularly first encountered depictions of the Day of Judgment, with the stern warning that only the good ones would escape the devil’s clutches. See now the contributions to *Fear and Its Representation in the Middle Ages and Renaissance*, ed. Anne Scott. Arizona Studies in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, 6 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2002); *Angst und Schrecken im Mittelalter: Ursachen, Funktionen, Bewältigungsstrategien*, ed. Annette Gerok-Reiter. Das Mittelalter, 12 (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 2007); and to *Krisen, Kriege, Katastrophen: zum Umgang mit Angst und Bedrohung im Mittelalter*,

appear as dialectical, but the more medieval artists were charged with depicting evil, the devil, vices, and the inferno, the more fanciful and imaginative they became. We could even talk about an entire field of ‘Monstrology,’ especially if we consider such monster images as those in the *Winchester Psalter*, the *Arnstein Bible*, the *Rutland Psalter*, the *Map Psalter*, the *Neville of Hornby Hours*, or the *Luttrell Psalter*.<sup>389</sup> The modern viewer can easily confirm this observation because the countless numbers of angels, images of the Virgin Mary, the various saints and martyrs easily appear as stereotypical and bland, whereas the visual representation of evil or sin commonly proves to be innovative and imaginary. Bluntly put, paradise is boring, hell is fascinating because the imagination of the former closely coincides with the biblical and theological teachings, whereas the imagination of the latter derives much material from a variety also of vernacular sources.<sup>390</sup>

Considering the immense display of grotesque figures all over medieval churches and cathedrals inside and outside, it would not be enough to talk only about their apotropaic function, which certainly would be one solid answer as to their curious presence, at least within the Christian context.<sup>391</sup> Their commonly rather bizarre and fanciful features clearly reveal that they also

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ed. Christian Rohr, Ursula Bieber, and Katharina Zeppezauer-Wachauer. *Interdisziplinäre Beiträge zu Mittelalter und früher Neuzeit*, 3 (Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag Winter, 2018).

**389** Alixe Bovey, “Medieval Monsters” (see note 263). This website has the great advantage that one can click on one image of a medieval manuscript and then gain access to a series of illustrations.

**390** Alois Hahn, “Unendliches Ende: Höllenvorstellungen in soziologischer Perspektive,” *Das Ende: Figuren einer Denkform*, ed. Karlheinz Stierle and Reiner Warning. *Poetik und Hermeneutik*, XVI (Munich: Fink, 1996), 155–82. See now also Michael D. Barbezat, *Burning Bodies: Community, Eschatology, and the Punishment of Heresy in the Middle Ages* (Ithaca, NY, and London: Cornell University Press, 2018). Cf. also Alan Bernstein, *The Formation of Hell* (see note 242). See now the contributions to *Jenseits: eine mittelalterliche und mediävistische Imagination: Interdisziplinäre Ansätze zur Analyse des Unerklärlichen*, ed. Christa Agnes Tuczay. *Beihefte zur Mediävistik*, 21 (Frankfurt a. M.: Peter Lang, 2016).

**391** R. Bartal, “La coexistencia de los signos apotropaicos cristianos y paganos en las entradas de las iglesias románicas,” *Archivo español de arte* 66/262 (1993): 113–31; Christa Sütterlin, “Universals in Apotropaic Symbolism: A Behavioral and Comparative Approach to Some Medieval Sculptures,” *Leonardo* 22.1 (1989): 65–74; for global perspectives on this phenomenon, see Stephan Peter Bumbacher, *Empowered Writing: Exorcistic and Apotropaic Rituals in Medieval China* (St. Petersburg, FL: Three Pines Press, 2012). See also the contributions to *Secrets and Discovery in the Middle Ages: Proceedings of the 5th European Congress of the Fédération Internationale des Instituts d’études médiévales* (Porto, 25th to 29th June 2013), ed. José Meirinhos, Celia López Alcalde, and João Rebalde. *Textes et études du Moyen-Age*, 90 (Barcelona and Rome: Fédération Internationale des Instituts d’études médiévales; Turnhout: Brepols, 2017).

served other functions; otherwise they would not have been sculpted in such detailed, refined manner, certainly costing a lot of money. As I have observed above, already, the learned tradition behind the monsters cannot be ignored, but we must not forget as well that here extraordinary images of medieval imagination come to the surface. In fact, many gargoyles, but also corbels and capitals, demonstrate great artistry and indicate a certain degree of playfulness beyond their religious and didactic purposes.

## Interlude II: The Dragon

Two fifteenth-century artists, Bernt Notke and Henning von der Heide<sup>392</sup> working in wood, created, for instance, a most lively and fear-inducing dragon for a figure of St. George fighting the monster, today kept in the St. Anne Museum in Lübeck, Germany, from 1504, initially made for the St. Jürgen's Chapel (St. George's Chappel) in the Ratzeburger Allee (see Fig. 5). A similarly impressive beast by the same two craftsmen appears in a similar, perhaps even more impressive St. George's sculpture in Storkyrkan in Stockholm, Sweden.<sup>393</sup>

There is no doubt that the ensemble in Lübeck, parallel to those in other Nordic churches, served to present the saint in a most dramatic setting, with the horseman attacking the beast with all his might and triumphing over evil, which the dragon symbolizes. Nevertheless, just as in the case of gargoyles, artistic imagination can be easily detected behind the sculpture, mirroring most dramatically the dragon's hissing and vicious defense against the sword-wielding George.

Considering the enormous popularity of dragons in literary texts and visual representations (paintings, sculptures) particularly in the late Middle Ages, we might recognize here a noteworthy shift in the mode by which imagination was translated into materiality. Whereas the dragons in the early Middle Ages tend to constitute (or represent) an existential threat, in later centuries they are still very dangerous, but the protagonists are all strong and brave enough to overcome that enemy and can thereby prove their masculinity and virility, as is the case

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<sup>392</sup> Jürgen Wittstock, Wulf Schadendorf, and Max Hasse, *Kirchliche Kunst des Mittelalters und der Reformationszeit; die Sammlung im St.-Annen-Museum* (Lübeck: Museum für Kunst und Kulturgeschichte, 1981); Uwe Albrecht and Jörg Rosenfeld, *Corpus der mittelalterlichen Holzskulptur und Tafelmalerei in Schleswig-Holstein*. Vol. 1: *Hansestadt Lübeck, St. Annen-Museum* (Kiel: Ludwig, 2005; 2nd ed. 2009).

<sup>393</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Saint\\_George\\_and\\_the\\_Dragon\\_\(Notke\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Saint_George_and_the_Dragon_(Notke)) (last accessed on Feb. 18, 2020). For Bernt Notke, see Peter Tångeberg, "Bernt Notke och altarskåpet i Rytterne," *Fornvännen: Journal of Swedish Antiquarian Research* 99.3 (2004): 20–224.



**Fig. 5:** Dragon fighting against St. George; St. Anna Museum, Lübeck, late fifteenth century (© Albrecht Classen)

most dramatically in *Das Lied vom Hürnen Seyfrid* (perhaps ca. 1250; it has survived, however, mostly only in prints from the sixteenth and seventeenth century).<sup>394</sup> Here we might have the good opportunity to differentiate more clearly between imagination and fantasy, with the latter term more applicable to the late Middle Ages when the imagined dragon morphed increasingly into a fanciful, no longer really threatening creature that only needs to be slaughtered so that the knight can prove his absolute manly superiority and good Christian faith.

## Hieronymus Bosch: Continuation

Imagination and fantasy all by themselves also held sway everywhere, as the *opus magnum* by Bosch clearly indicates, insofar as those images created horror and delight at the same time. Even though the Flemish artist created his altar

<sup>394</sup> *Das Lied vom Hürnen Seyfrid* (see note 271), XXXIV–XXXVIII.

pieces for highly regarded and ranked patrons within the Church,<sup>395</sup> he obviously enjoyed considerable freedom to delve into his own fantasy and to create a panoply of imaginary figures. Those were supposed to mirror common concepts of the conditions in hell, for instance, but as an artist, Bosch was not required, as far as we can tell, to meet specific requirements in the development and creation of his art pieces.

We can credit Dante above all with having created already a most fantastic and standard-setting scenario of the various sinners down in hell in narrative terms, which Gustave Doré (1832–1883) was to render into daunting and terrifying imagery in the nineteenth century (1861–1868). When we turn to Bosch, however, that is, his “Garden of Earthly Delight,” probably created after 1494,<sup>396</sup> we are both delighted with and horrified by a monstrous, hellish scenery on the right panel where nothing seems to be right, where all people who have ended up in hell are punished in a most cruel fashion, and where things are just different from the normal conditions here in life. While previous scholarship since the time shortly after his death has approached his work from a variety of perspectives (moralizing intentions, then regarded as an expression of early realism, thereupon as pure artistry, subsequently as a world determined by symbolism, or as a mirror of a secret heretical sect, etc.), we can be certain that Bosch and his art studio paid greatest attention to spiritual matter, to fantasy and imagination and operated with an astonishing degree of artistic freedom which was certainly not always in conformity with the teachings of the Catholic Church. To charge him for heresy would go too far, for sure, but he obviously embraced a degree of artistic freedom that elevated his work far outside of the theological canon.

As Carmen Garrido and Roger Van Shoute comment, “Bosch’s mind showed a particular predilection for ghastly and cruel things, which would explain the abundance of fantasy themes.”<sup>397</sup> They acknowledge that there are other ways of viewing Bosch’s paintings, but it remains clear that here we can identify some of the most dramatic, creative, transgressive, grotesque, and bizarre reflections

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<sup>395</sup> Most likely, his major patron was the Burgundian courtier Hippolyte de Berthoz, and not Duke Philippe of Burgundy. As to the ‘Last Judgment’ triptych in the Paintings Gallery of the Academy of Fine Arts, Vienna, see Jos Koldewij, Luuk Hoogstede, Koen H Janssens, et al., “The Patron of Hieronymus Bosch’s ‘Last Judgment’ Triptych in Vienna,” *The Burlington Magazine* 160 (2018): 106–11.

<sup>396</sup> Matthijs IJssink and Jos Koldewij, *Hieronymus Bosch: Visionen eines Genies* (Stuttgart: Belser, 2016), 55. They point out, above all, that some elements are obviously copied from Hartmann Schedel’s world chronicle from 1493. See also Fritz Koreny, together with Gabriele Bartz and Erwin Pokorny *Hieronymus Bosch: Die Zeichnungen. Werkstatt und Nachfolge bis zum Ende des 16. Jahrhunderts*. Catalogue raisonné (Turnhout: Brepols, 2012).

<sup>397</sup> Carmen Garrido and Roger Van Schoute, *Bosch at the Museo del Prado* (see note 377), 13.

of a late medieval mind. Little wonder that scholars have failed so far to reach any consensus regarding the ultimate meaning and message of this text, although I would suggest that the artist primarily aimed at providing visual material for the human imagination and fantasy at large, and then left the triptych for the viewers to interpret the conglomerate of pictorial elements on their own. In the inventory of El Prado from 1593 we can read, quite revealingly: “una pintura de la variedad del mundo” – a picture about the variety of the world.<sup>398</sup>

However, in many respects Bosch’s details are extremely realistic, at least in an illusionary fashion, whether we consider the presentation of the dragon tree, a hedgehog sitting in a translucent ball, the body of an owl embraced by a naked man, people mostly submerged in water placed around a pile of fruit (perhaps blackberries), countless nude figures dragged or abused by devils, weapons and tools, a bird devouring a sinner, people defecating gold coins, others situated in a transparent bell or sphere, groups of birds, and so forth. Yet, within this panopticon, as we might want to call Bosch’s canvases somewhat anachronistically, the artist also included numerous fantastic animals, reptiles, grotesque scenes, and a world that appears to have become topsy-turvy in the worst sense of the word. In one little scene, a naked couple lies next to each other, but his head is replaced with a big blue fruit, perhaps a supersized blueberry.

In the background, numerous natural settings appear, but despite their realistically seeming features that remind us almost of Albrecht Dürer, some of the rocks prove to be enormously large disks that are held together by a cut tree trunk. Imagination and fantasy are given free reign here, both for the depiction of this world and for the presentation of the earliest stage of the cosmos at the point when God created the earth. However, Bosch demonstrates throughout that he had carried out very careful studies of nature, of bodies, of facial features, hair, feathers, plants, and rocks. Nevertheless, both in paradise and in hell the artists projected countless elements that mirror hybridity and transgression, a strong sense of playfulness within a serious framework of theological thinking, hence a realization that as an artist he had the possibility and the obligation to experiment with his own fantasy.

Bosch found many imitators, and we might go so far as to argue that he launched a whole new genre of grotesque art, such as the lithograph “Patience” (1557) by Pieter van der Heyden (1530–1572), who in turn drew inspiration from Pieter Bruegel the Elder (1525–1569).<sup>399</sup> Hans Memling’s “Day of Judgment” from

<sup>398</sup> Hans Holländer, *Hieronymus Bosch* (see note 378), 139.

<sup>399</sup> Bertram Kaschek, “Die Hölle auf Erden: Hieronymus Boschs Erben im druckgraphischen Frühwerk Pieter Bruegels d. Ä.,” *Hieronymus Boschs Erben*, ed. Tobias Pfeifer-Helke (Berlin: Deutscher Kunstverlag, 2015), 14–28; here 20–23.

ca. 1467–1471 also would have to be considered in this context. The scenario of hell has been a mainstay in western iconography and the history of mentality, constantly serving, even if under differing circumstances, psychological needs to project a nether world of sheer horror where no empathy exists and no doubt about the condemnable sinfulness. There, nothing remains but punishment, brutal and horrible. This also applies to the many other aspects that I have addressed so far, all pertaining to the collective or also individualistic memory of medieval imagination and fantasy.

In a way, as Friedrich Vollhardt suggests, we can draw a direct line from Dante's *Inferno* to Bosch's hellish scenes to Brueghel's genre paintings, and then to the modern world when artists and writers were faced with the extraordinarily difficult task of coming to terms with the Holocaust, for instance, in aesthetic, ethical, and epistemological terms – certainly an anachronistic comparison here, and yet relevant for the larger question.<sup>400</sup> How does a pre-modern artist express deadly fear, terror, a sense of sinfulness, and profound dread of evil spirits?

While the audience of *Aucassin et Nicolette* still could smile about the travesty of the kingdom of Torelore, and while the readers/listeners of Dante's *Divina Commedia* still could sustain the horrors of *Inferno* because Virgil accompanies Dante as a guide and because Beatrice, Dante's beloved, watches him from high in Paradiso, in Bosch's right-side panel reserved for the depiction of hell all hope for and trust in a world that might have made sense is lost, apart from the trust in God, of course, although that would not be any consolation for those condemned already to eternal punishment.

Whatever theological reading we might apply here, and the opinions differ considerably, we can credit Bosch with having accomplished a masterpiece of visual imagination. Many different sources of fantasy can be detected, although a universal, stringent analysis might be rather difficult, if not impossible. Hans Holländer correctly notes that all our efforts tend to lead to more confusion and contradictions because “[d]ie Vieldeutigkeit der Details führt am Ende nicht zu eindeutigen, meßbaren Verhältnissen, vielmehr zu gesteigerter Verrätselung” (158; the ambiguity of the details at the end does not lead to unambiguous, measurable conditions, but rather to an increased mystification).

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**400** Friedrich Vollhardt, “Ausblicke ins Jenseits: Imaginationen der Hölle und ihre Revisionen in der Literatur der Frühen Neuzeit,” *Hieronymus Boschs Erben* (see note 399), 29–39. He points us to one of the oldest depiction of hell in literary terms, the *Visio Tnugdali* from ca. 1149, which exerted a tremendous influence on posterity, as documented by ca. 150 manuscripts and incunabula (30). See *Visions of Heaven and Hell Before Dante*, ed. Eileen Gardiner (New York: Italica Press, 1989), which includes an English translation of the Latin text.



Focusing on the central panel, presenting the garden of lustfulness, hence a world of sinfulness, or *luxuria*, Holländer attempts to come to term with the presentation, and he obviously has to acknowledge that the contradictory nature of the elements in this large scene makes it impossible to reach a firm understanding:

es entsteht ein Gewimmel, in dem sich alles mit allem vermischt. Das Ganze ist eine Natur, die zugleich völlig widernatürlich ist; Erfindung, Phantasie, die zugleich lebendig wirkende Natur ist, und dazwischen findet sich Technisches, große Kessel, ... mannigfaltige Varianten der Kugelform des Kosmos der Außenseite." (161)

[thus a hurry-scurry develops in which everything mingles with everything else. The whole is nature, which is at the same time unnatural: invention, fantasy, which is at the same time life-producing nature, and in the midst of it all technical things, large vats ... multiple variants of the globe shape of the cosmos on the external side.]

Indeed, we would be best advised to accept that Bosch allowed his fantasy full freedom because he knew that it was still embedded in the specific theological teachings of the larger framework of the triptych. Whenever the eye turns to the details, the mind begins to experience confusion, but the larger context, the wonders of this world and the indescribability of the nether realm, determine after all. Bosch's strategy seems to have been to allow imagination and fantasy to rule supreme, as concrete and specific the details might be. The theological messages are unequivocal, as is the case also with his other large triptychs and smaller paintings, and yet we as viewers cannot fully fathom the meaning of Bosch's visualized world, probably because it represents a treasure house of his own imagination and that of the collective of his time.

The world is not rational or free from contingency, and the human mind can only strive to overcome all those epistemological barriers, but ultimately, as Linfert rightly claims, this leads to a new level of insights, born from the artist's own imagination.<sup>401</sup> Insofar as the world is unstable, unpredictable, ambiguous, and far away from the unequivocal binary opposition between good and evil, as the Catholic Church tried to teach, imagination and fantasy emerge as important counter positions, as reflected in Bosch's paintings.<sup>402</sup>

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<sup>401</sup> Carl Linfert, *Jheronimus Bosch* (Cologne: DuMont Schauberg, 1970), 104; Holländer, *Hieronymus Bosch* (see note 378), 161, at first seems to hesitate to accept Linfert's thesis, but ultimately agrees with him because a simple binary method for the analysis of Bosch's works would not be helpful at all.

<sup>402</sup> Linfert, *Jheronimus Bosch* (see note 401), 104–06, emphasizes that the gaze emerges as the dominant strategy of all beings portrayed by the artist, expressing the fundamental operations of "Sehen und Wünschen" (106; seeing and desiring).

To our amazement, even still today, wherever our eyes turn on Bosch's panels, we discover new exotic creatures, puzzling objects, contorted bodies, threatening birds, curious fruit, reptiles, insects, delightful sceneries and hellish infernos. A dead body, for instance, hangs in the round handle of a key; a monkey swings through the space suspended from a skull; a maid draws wine from a keg; a huge knife cuts through two ears; a devil cuts through the body of a sinner; a naked man ice skates behind an odd looking sled; bodies are caught in the string of a harp; musical scores are written on the behind of a naked body; and so on. Most curiously, a man's face appears underneath a disk and gazes to the right, not at the viewer, apparently smiling about the chaos in front of his eyes, and it might even be the artist himself. The world and the afterworld are in an uproar, an outbreak of stunning fantasy and imagination.

However, as R.-H. Marijnissen has alerted us so correctly, we must always remember that this triptych served as an altarpiece, or at least for some religious purposes, so we cannot identify it as a profane work of art for entertainment or for secular interests, as fanciful and imaginative "The Garden of Earthly Delights" proves to be. First, it is an art work, second, it has to be studied within its own cultural-historical context, and third, every hypothesis regarding this triptych must prove its viability, and we have to be very careful not to impose anachronistically some modern psychological theories on the proper reading of the panels.<sup>403</sup> Nevertheless, here we pursue the topic of imagination and fantasy, and there is no doubt that Bosch has provided us in a unique and most dramatic way with a powerful key into his mind-set and that of his contemporaries.

There is much playfulness, much learned theology, biblical knowledge, and also much transgression, distortion, hybridization, and hence experimentation in this altarpiece. None of those aspects can, if possible at all, be easily extracted all by itself, and that is exactly why the study of imagination and fantasy comes into play and offers new avenues. Altogether, and that would seem to be the most reasonable in our approach to Bosch, as much as he operated with the wide range of values, concepts, ideals, and notions propagated by the Church, as much he certainly also allowed his own creative mind to populate his panels. Medieval literature and a number of comparable art works preceded him in that regard, but Bosch can certainly be identified as the master of imagination and fantasy.

Little wonder that his paintings continue to appeal to us today because they appear to be so grotesque, surreal, and bizarre, and yet are far away from all that because of their symbolism and playfulness at the same time. In a way,

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403 R.-H. Marijnissen, *Jheronimus Bosch* (see note 378), 56–60.

Bosch opens profound windows into human imagination, mirroring fear, fascination, curiosity, and the interest in the absolute ‘other.’ We must be careful, of course, to avoid post-modern terminology that would confuse our critical cultural-historical approach, so we cannot naively claim Bosch as a crypto-modern artists. Nevertheless, there is no doubt that his triptych serves exceedingly well to shed light on late medieval imagination as it permeates, in a most creative way, the religious, biblical presentation on the three panels.

## Interlude III: One More Medieval Example: *Alexanderlied*

We can gain a good sense of the historical context if we briefly look backwards and draw also from a twelfth-century verse narrative, Priest Lambrecht’s Middle High German *Alexanderlied* (ca. 1150).<sup>404</sup> Of course, thematically and conceptually the differences to Bosch’s “Garden of Earthly Delights” could not be bigger, but there is one scene within the text that helps us understand the not so insignificant interest already in the Middle Ages to explore hybridity and the radical transformation of human beings into plants, or vice versa, and this well before the rise of Animal and Plant Studies in the twenty-first century.

After much fighting and many victories, Alexander and his men have the opportunity to take a break and discover a beautiful spot in the middle of a forest – certainly a *locus amoenus* – where they encounter a whole group of delightful young women who are all more than eager to grant their lovely bodies to the desirous men. The situation quickly turns into an erotic utopia of an extraordinary kind, with limitless sexual pleasures, but after some months of sheer joy and happiness, the men face the sad truth that these women are nothing but flowers as they suddenly wither away when fall sets in.<sup>405</sup> Lambrecht

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**404** Werner Schröder, “Der Pfaffe Lambrecht,” *Die deutsche Literatur des Mittelalters: Verfasserlexikon*, ed. Kurt Ruh et al. Second, completely rev. ed. Vol. 5 (Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1985), 494–510. For an updated bibliography, see Volker Zapf, “Pfaffe Lambrecht,” *Deutsches Literatur-Lexikon: Das Mittelalter*, ed. Wolfgang Achnitz. Vol. 5 (Berlin and Boston: Walter de Gruyter, 2013), 61–68. The content, however, is mostly the same. See now also Elisabeth Lienert, *Deutsche Antikenromane des Mittelalters*. Grundlagen der Germanistik, 39 (Berlin: Erich Schmidt Verlag, 2001), 30–49; she discusses, however, the scene with the flower girls only in passing (43).

**405** Pfaffe Lambrecht, *Alexanderroman*. Mittelhochdeutsche / Neuhochdeutsch. Ed. and commentary by Elisabeth Lienert (Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam jun., 2007), 4649–908; see also Christoph Mackert, *Die Alexander-Geschichte in der Version des ‘Pfaffen’ Lambrecht: Die*

does not pursue any theological or biblical purposes; he wants to entertain a secular audience and to provide literary pleasure by projecting this fantastic and amatory episode.<sup>406</sup>

Here we encounter, in most sensuous terms, truly a form of medieval erotic fantasy, appealing to the male audience, without raising any objections to the sexual pleasures that the men can enjoy in this forest setting. There is absolutely no moral criteria at play, and since the flower girls then simply pass away, there are no consequences for Alexander and his soldiers.

Intriguingly, this verse narrative already anticipated the possibility that there could be an intricate, erotic relationship between people and plants, especially because plants, flowers, and berries appear so ubiquitously in the margins of medieval manuscripts, such as in the case of the Book of Hours made for Mary of Burgundy ca. 1477.<sup>407</sup> This phenomenon is rather relevant for us insofar as recent theoretical research has long recognized the importance of the fantastic in the literary discourse, though it has limited itself mostly to modernity.<sup>408</sup> By the

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*frühmittelhochdeutsche Bearbeitung der Alexanderdichtung des Alberich von Bisinzo und die Anfänge weltlicher Schriftepiik in deutscher Sprache*. Beihefte zur Poetica, 23 (Munich: Wilhelm Fink, 1999). The motif of Alexander the Great and his exploration of the mythical East was rather ubiquitous throughout the Middle Ages and the early modern age. Here we encounter not only the interest in the 'Other' as such, but also a very definitive emanation of imagination and fantasy; see *The Alexander Romance: History and Literature* (see note 26). Alexander's experiences served the European readers as a most convenient proxy medium to travel to the East, but only in one's mind.

**406** Tomas Tomasek, "Die Welt der Blumenmädchen im 'Straßburger Alexander': ein literarischer utopischer 'Diskurs' aus dem Mittelalter," *"Das Schöne soll sein": Aisthesis in der deutschen Literatur; Festschrift für Wolfgang F. Bender*, ed. Peter Heßelmann (Bielefeld: Aisthesis, 2001), 43–55; Albrecht Classen, "Pleasure and Leisure from the Middle Ages to the early Nineteenth Century: The Rediscovery of a Neglected Dimension in Cultural History. Also an Introduction," *Pleasure and Leisure in the Middle Ages and Early Modern Age* (see note 64), 1–159; here 157.

**407** Celia Fisher, *Flowers in Medieval Manuscripts* (Toronto and Buffalo, NY: University of Toronto Press, 2004); there are countless examples of medieval imagination gone haywire, involving animals, plants, humans, objects, and monsters. See, for instance, the *Gorleston Psalter*, ca. 1310–1324, British Library, Add. Ms 49622, fol. 195v; or cf. Ms 107, Bréviaire de Renaud de Bar (1302–1304), fols. 89r–141v, Bibliothèque de Verdun. Any search online will yield a rich harvest of such manuscript illuminations. See here *Das Stundenbuch der Maria von Burgund* (see note 132). For most recent approaches regarding the interdependency and interaction of plans and people, see the website of the new scholarly group "Literary and Cultural Plant Studies Network," online at: <https://plants.sites.arizona.edu/> (last accessed on Feb. 18, 2020), which also offers a bibliography, though medieval aspects are not yet considered there.

**408** Annette Simonis, *Grenzüberschreitungen in der phantastischen Literatur: Einführung in die Theorie und Geschichte eines narrativen Genres*. Beiträge zur neueren Literaturgeschichte.

same token, the textual narrative and the visual representation provide a forum for fantasy to come to the fore and manifest itself. However, we have to remind ourselves here that we are not simply talking about the fantastic, as in playful fantasy, but about imaginary conditions of all life in an inclusive matrix. The human mind can create concepts pertaining to that notion, and medieval artists and poets were already fully capable of contributing to this phenomenon.

## Bosch Again: The Deep Power of Imagination

Bosch simply went some steps further than his predecessors and operated as an artist who had the freedom and privilege to operate freely with the most fanciful material in order to reflect on human vices and virtues, and the way toward salvation. Theologically speaking, he was certainly orthodox in his thinking, not deviating from the standard teachings of the Church. Artistically, however, his triptychs demonstrate a fantastic ability to allow his own imagination of the horrors of the afterworld to come forth in a most creative fashion.<sup>409</sup> It is unknown, and probably also unlikely, whether he was familiar with Lambrecht's *Alexanderlied*. He might have learned about this story through other sources, but we do not need to trace possible links between text and triptych. Instead, we recognize in both an interest in the theme that plants, birds, animals, etc. could create a hybrid union with people. In Bosch's hellish scenario, we observe similar strategies at work, and both times the artist/poet allowed his fantasy and imagination influence his work (Figs. 6 and 7).<sup>410</sup>

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Folge 3, 220 (Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag Winter, 2005); see also the contributions to *Übergänge und Entgrenzungen in der Fantastik*, ed. Christine Lötscher, Petra Schrackmann, Ingrid Tomkowiak, and Aleta-Amirée von Holzen. *Fantastikforschung*, 1 (Vienna, Zürich, et al.: Lit, 2014). For theoretical reflections on this genre, see Uwe Durst, *Theorie der phantastischen Literatur*, rev., corrected, and expanded ed. *Literatur: Forschung und Wissenschaft*, 9 (Berlin and Münster: Lit, 2007). There are, however, a few exceptions, such as David Rotman, "Textual Animals Turned into Narrative Fantasies: The Imaginative Middle Ages," *Interfaces: A Journal of Medieval European Literatures* 5 (2018): 65–77, who focuses mostly on antique and medieval Jewish folk tales.

**409** Peter Dinzelsbacher, "'Ein Gott der Rache ist der Herr.' Die Höllentafeln des Hieronymus Bosch," *Hieronymus Boschs Weltgerichts-Triptychon in seiner Zeit* (forthcoming). I thank the author for sharing his contribution before it appeared in print.

**410** Otto Benesch, "Hieronymus Bosch and the Thinking of the Late Middle Ages," *Konsthistorisk Tidskrift* 26 (1957): 21–42; Anna Rooth, "Erzählstoff und Symbole in Boschs Malerei," *ARV – Scandinavian Yearbook of Folklore* 52 (1996): 63–85; Joseph Koerner, "Impossible Objects: Bosch's Realism," *RES – Anthropology and Aesthetics* 46 (2004): 73–97.



**Fig. 6:** Hieronymus Bosch, “The Garden of Earthly Delights,” detail from the right panel showing hell (public domain); see also Wilhelm Fraenger, *Hieronymus Bosch* (1975; New York: G. P. Putnam’s Sons, 1983)



**Fig. 7:** Hieronymus Bosch, “The Garden of Earthly Delights” – Musical Instruments, right panel (public domain)

Altogether, as we can conclude at this point, the investigation of those two topics and their manifestation in the pre-modern world yields many meaningful results, and they especially open relevant perspectives toward human culture. Many other artists and writers could be consulted here, such as Shakespeare or Molière, Rabelais or Cervantes, Gryphius or Goethe.<sup>411</sup> In essence, literary texts

<sup>411</sup> Stuart Sillars, *Shakespeare and the Visual Imagination* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015); Neil Cornwell, *The Literary Fantastic: From Gothic to Postmodernism* (New York: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1990).

thrive from the imaginary at any rate, and as Bosch demonstrated most vividly, art works as well. However, both in the *Alexanderlied* and in the “Garden of Earthly Delight” we observe a remarkable expansion of this phenomenon insofar as the natural or inanimate world merges with the human dimension. This is a profound reflection of creativity and imaginary freedom already in the pre-modern world. Both Lambrecht and Bosch operate with fictionality, as modern literary theory has called it (Hans-Georg Gadamer, Hans Robert Jauss, Kendall L. Walton; Wolfgang Iser), which means that they rely on much artistic or narrative freedom for themselves as the legitimizing tool for their work.

Margit Sutrop, examining the thought process of those two theoreticians, Iser and Walton, reaches the for us relevant insight that fictionality makes it possible “to see the world from a different standpoint ... Learning to see the world from someone else’s perspective also gives us the possibility to better understand other people and ourselves as well.”<sup>412</sup> Thus we gain access to a wide range of wishes, beliefs, memories, imaginations, desires, and intentions held by another person, real or fictional.

Both the case of Lambrecht and of Bosch confirm this observation, as their creations open a perspective toward an alternative world, both positive and negative. For Sutrop, in contrast to the modern digital media, the printed book or the painting make it possible to imagine “in a first-person way doing things and undergoing experiences that are inaccessible to us in real life ...”<sup>413</sup> However, with respect to imagination, it does not matter whether the literary text or the art work is available in concrete, material terms (printed, canvas), or electronically, because we are dealing with fictional projections that reveal deeply held convictions or opinions, impressions or sentiments. In that context the format through which those images come forward is irrelevant.

## Final Thoughts

In conclusion, we could draw from all those examples discussed above, whether from Gottfried von Straßburg’s *Tristan* or Dante’s *Divina Commedia*, from *Aucassin et Nicolette* or *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, to gain solid confirmation for this global observation pertaining to the creativity of the human mind. The fictional world, in many different manifestations, invites us to pursue new explorations of

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<sup>412</sup> Margit Sutrop, *Fiction and Imagination: The Anthropological Function of Literature*. Explicatio (Paderborn: Mentis-Verlag, 2000), 220.

<sup>413</sup> Sutrop, *Fiction and Imagination* (see note 412), 221.



imagination and fantasy, which the written text or the painted scenario reveals when we apply a close introspection. The fictional world is not something simply abstract or irrelevant and never has been. Properly understood, here we encounter a laboratory of human behavior, mentality, values, ideals, fears, or desires. In this regard, fantasy is simply one of the many avenues into this hidden realm.

Fictionality, both in the Middle Ages and today, points to a world to be imagined or that could be imagined by means of fantasy as a result of our creativity. In this respect, the literary discourse, along with the artistic productivity, emerges as a major medium to connect the imagination with the factual world, which, in this process, seems to be almost less significant than the fictional one. By the same token, artistic and literary expression convey to us what fantasies and inner sentiments occupy people, and this in the pre-modern world as well, if not even more so than today.

Literature and the arts are a form of performance, and they invite the audience to participate on their respective stage. Insofar as every human being experiences imagination and fantasy, they are universally shared tools, maybe archetypal, that make fictional texts and fanciful paintings (Bosch) so meaningful for viewers both then and today.<sup>414</sup> Imagination is, however, not simply a projection of something fictional or fanciful in our mind without relevance, but the gateway toward a shared cultural heritage that is constantly growing on the basis of fundamental concepts and ideals derived from deep traditions. Could we talk here about a collective or individual subconsciousness?<sup>415</sup>

Our collective effort promises to expand our understanding of the cultural history concerning the human mind and its infinite possibilities to dream, to invent, to conceive of ideas, to formulate concepts, and so forth.<sup>416</sup> This signals,

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**414** See the contributions to *Lesbarkeit der Kultur: Literaturwissenschaften zwischen Kulturtechnik und Ethnographie*, ed. Gerhard Neumann and Sigrid Weigel (Munich: Wilhelm Fink, 2000).

**415** For a useful review of the relevant research debate, see Elisabeth Vavra, "Hieronymus Bosch: Teufelsbildner oder Maler der Fiktion," *Künstler, Dichter, Gelehrte*, ed. Ulrich Müller and Werner Wunderlich. *Mittelalter Mythen*, 4 (Constance: UVK Verlagsgesellschaft, 2005), 97–114. She concludes with a quote from Hans Belting's *Hieronymus Bosch: Garten der Lüste* (see note 378), according to whom the artist was neither aiming for a visual presentation of hell and other dimensions in conjunction with strong theological and moral teachings, nor for the glorification of human pleasures. Instead, he aimed for artistic freedom and created "eine Trophäe der Imagination" (here 113). Otherwise, however, Vavra does not take any position and only summarizes the history of research.

**416** Eric S. Rabkin, *Fantastic Worlds: Myths, Tales, and Stories* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979). It is noteworthy that Rabkin uses the same detail from Bosch's right panel as I do here (see Fig. 6). Cf. also *The Oxford Companion to the Mind*, ed. Richard L. Gregory with the assistance of O. L. Zangwill. 2nd ed. (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1987),

for instance, that here the foundations or sources of literature, the arts, music, philosophy, and also religion are the focus of our investigations that pursue the essential question what stands behind those statements or products, or, what were the motivations and intentions, simply put, the ideas. As we have seen already, such scholarly analyses are difficult to carry out, but there are always sufficient clues and keys to succeed in this effort after all without becoming a prey of at times rather speculative, psychologizing interpretive strategies.<sup>417</sup>

## Finally, a Word from Don Miguel de Unamuno y Jugo

However, we can certainly also embrace and draw from the theoretical reflections by Miguel de Unamuno, the famous Spanish/Basque professor of Greek in Salamanca, essayist, novelist, poet, playwright, and philosopher, who once formulated in 1913: “The world, what we call the world, the ‘objective’ world, is a tradition ... given ... from a complex of ideas, images, notions, perceptions and so on, embodied in the language and transmitted to us by our forebears.”<sup>418</sup> Further:

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Jonah Lehrer, *Imagine: How Creativity Works* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2012); Kevin Pask, *The Fairy Way of Writing: Shakespeare to Tolkien* (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2013). Of course, here we move into the world of psychology and would have to review a legion of relevant studies.

**417** Henk Boom, *De bezeten visionair: vijfhonderd jaar controverse over Jheronimus Bosch* (Amsterdam: Athenaeum-Polack & van Gennep, 2016); Dietmar Kampar, *Unmögliche Gegenwart: zur Theorie der Phantasie* (Munich: Wilhelm Fink, 1995); Stefan Fischer, *Im Irrgarten der Bilder: die Welt des Hieronymus Bosch* (Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam jun., 2016). I leave out the host of popularizing studies on Bosch’s art that often border on the fictional.

**418** Miguel de Unamuno, *The Tragic Sense of Life in Men and Nations*, trans. Anthony Kerrigan. Selected Works, 4. Bollingen Series, 85 (1913; Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984), 310. I am indebted to Robert Wade Kenny who introduced and translated Unamuno’s last lecture into English and situated his thoughts about the imaginative power of language as the foundation of the self so well. See his article, “Language as a Dialectical Engagement with Becoming and The Last Lesson of Don Miguel de Unamuno,” *Advances in Literary Studies* 7.4 (2018): 123–54 (online at: <https://www.scirp.org/journal/paperinformation.aspx?paperid=94855>; last accessed on Feb. 18, 2020). Cf. also the contributions to *Escrituras del yo en la obra de Miguel de Unamuno*, ed. Berit Callsen. Studien zu den Romanischen Literaturen und Kulturen, 3 (Berlin: Peter Lang, 2019). For a good introduction to Unamuno, see the contributions to *A Companion to Miguel de Unamuno*, ed. Julia Biggane and John Macklin. Colección Támesis. Serie A: Monografías, 360 (Woodbridge, Suffolk: Tamesis, 2016).

A language, in effect, is a potential philosophy. Platonism is the Greek language which speaks through Plato, developing in him its ancient metaphors. Scholasticism is the philosophy of the dead Latin of the Middle Ages struggling against the various vernacular languages. French discourses through Descartes; German through Kant and Hegel; English through Hume and John Stuart Mill. The logical point of departure for all philosophical speculation is not the 'I', nor is it representation (*Vorstellung*), that is, the world as it immediately appears to the senses, but rather is it a mediate or historical representation, humanly elaborated and given us principally in the language through which we know the world.<sup>419</sup>

To this we can add the insightful observation, formulated by Unamuno as well early on in the same treatise:

Reason ... is a social product. It owes its origin, perhaps, to language. We think articulately, that is, reflectively, thanks to articulate language, and this language arose from the need to communicate our thoughts to our neighbors. To think is to talk with oneself, and each of us talks to himself because we have had to talk with another.<sup>420</sup>

Although he does not discuss 'imagination' or 'fantasy' in the narrow sense of the word, he identifies nevertheless in the for him typically brilliant fashion the origin of our actions, world views, attitudes, behavior, and concepts as resting in our mind where the first words and thoughts form originally. The human language thus emerges, as other scholars have often also confirmed, as the most direct expression of our imagination.<sup>421</sup> Dreaming or imagining thus evolves as the cornerstones of all our intellectual activities, our mind-set, and our interaction with the real world. Little wonder that imagination is so important for children to develop psychologically, intellectually, and mentally.<sup>422</sup> By the same token, as Unamuno also emphasizes, the product of an author's imagination tends to outlive the author him/herself, so the ideas resulting

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**419** Unamuno, *The Tragic Sense of Life in Men and Nations* (see note 418), 310.

**420** Unamuno, *The Tragic Sense of Life in Men and Nations* (see note 418), 29. He also remarked: "The world, what we call the world, the 'objective' world, is a tradition ... given ... from a complex of ideas, images, notions, perceptions and so on, embodied in the language and transmitted to us by our forebears" (161). In this regard, Unamuno was far ahead of his time, and certainly anticipated Martin Heidegger's *Sein und Zeit* (1927) by more than a decade.

**421** See now the contributions to *Jeux de mots et créativité: Langue(s), discours et littérature*, ed. Bettina Full and Michelle Lecolle. *The Dynamics of Wordplay*, 4 (Berlin and Boston: Walter de Gruyter, 2018).

**422** See, for instance, Paul L. Harris, *The Work of the Imagination*. *Understanding Children's Worlds* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000); Hubert Sowa, *Bildung der Imagination*. Vol. 1. *Kunstpädagogische Theorie, Praxis und Forschung im Bereich einbildender Wahrnehmung und Darstellung*. Vol. 2: *Bildlichkeit und Vorstellungsbildung in Lernprozessen* (Oberhausen: Athena, 2012/2014).

from our mind are not confined by our lives and easily take on their own existence in reality.<sup>423</sup>

Unamuno developed many other philosophical and literary concepts, especially the view that life was tragic because we live with the awareness that we will all die (*Del sentimiento trágico de la vida*, 1912), but we can draw here mostly from his sense of life being highly complex and paradoxical, consisting of the material domain *and* the intellectual, abstract one that is situated in our mind and comes forward by means of the human language.<sup>424</sup>

Philosophers such as Martin Heidegger and recent critics such as Northrop Frye have strongly supported this approach pursued by Unamuno, the latter suggesting, for instance, in light of the art theory by William Blake (1757–1827), that human existence is constituted primarily by the experience of imagination and the sharing of desire, as commonly expressed by literary or visual works. Imagination and fantasy thus emerge, as we also observe in Unamuno's thoughts, as the engines to overcome the categories of language and our world perception in purely material terms, offering innovative avenues of perceiving the world or actually creating it all the time. In Frye's words, "the imaginative mind, therefore, is the one which has realized its own freedom." Imaginative vision does not allow us "to escape nature: it enables us to undertake the imaginative conquest of nature."<sup>425</sup> The phenomena in the pre-modern world that I have examined above, certainly confirm those findings and provide us with much fodder for further thought about our own existence today.

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**423** Donald Allan Rosenberg, "Unamuno's Use of Paradox" Ph.D. diss. University of Florida, 2005: "The literary imagination of a given author outlives the latter through his or her works. The fictional characters never lived, but the author did. An example is Don Quixote, who long outlives the physical body of his author Cervantes. One may wonder who of the two is more real. The principles, messages, and concepts involved with the fictional Manchego transcend historical limits, whereas the real lifespan of his author is confined to a relatively brief period in history" (49–50). Online at: [https://archive.org/stream/unamunosuseofpar00rose/unamunosuseofpar00rose\\_djvu.txt](https://archive.org/stream/unamunosuseofpar00rose/unamunosuseofpar00rose_djvu.txt) (last accessed on Feb. 18, 2020). See now also Manuel García Serrano, *Ficción y conocimiento: filosofía e imaginación en Unamuno, Borges y Ortega*. Publicaciones académicas. Biblioteca contemporánea, 17 (Vigo: Ed. Acad. del Hispanismo, 2014).

**424** *Escrituras del yo en la obra de Miguel de Unamuno*, ed. Berit Callsen. Studien zu den Romanischen Literaturen und Kulturen, 3 (Berlin: Peter Lang, 2019).

**425** Northrop Frye, *Fearful Symmetry: A Study of William Blake* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1969), 265. For a critical analysis of Frye's concept, see Robert Wade Kenney, "Truth as Metaphor: Imaginative Vision and the Ethos of Rhetoric," *The Ethos of Rhetoric*, ed. Michael J. Hyde (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 2004), 34–55. According to Kenney, Frye identified the following notions of imagination: imaginative vision is pre-predicative, transcendent, transmittable in communicative acts, culturally specific, developed, and concerned (note 40, pp. 53–54).

## Outlook

Fantasy has always been much more attractive than reports and narratives that are down-to-earth. As we will remember, Marco Polo's *Il Milione* was much less successful than John Mandeville's *Travels* because the latter drew heavily from fantasy and copied much from previous travelogues, producing his work as an armchair author.<sup>426</sup> Written at a time when increasingly all passages to the East were closed off because Islamic powers imposed a serious block – in 1316 the khans of Persia adopted the Islamic faith – and when England and France were already embroiled in a bitter war that was to last ca. hundred years (1337–1453), Mandeville's *Travels* returned to an imaginary view of the East and thus titillated its reader much more than Polo's rather serious and critical account. Imagination of the Orient mattered more for Mandeville and his audience than a realistic depiction, as it used to be more commonly the case with Odorico da Pordenone or Marco Polo.<sup>427</sup> But this was not an exclusive phenomenon of the Middle Ages.

Apart from some adaptations, reconfigurations, and modifications, nineteenth-century English Victorian literature, for instance, recreated fantastic images of Persia, for instance, and allowed many dream concepts about the Orient to enter their poetic visions. It might be difficult to talk about Orientalism already in the pre-modern age because of rather different power structures and mental-historical conditions, but there are clearly recognizable features resulting from imagination both in the Middle Ages and in the modern era concerning the Eastern world, whether we think of Oriental spices, perfumes, tapestry, and other products reaching the European markets already since the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.<sup>428</sup> However, we know at this point mostly only about

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<sup>426</sup> Ian M. Higgins, *Writing East* (see note 261); John Lamer, "Plucking Hairs from the Great Cham's Beard: Marco Polo, Jan de Langhe, and Sir John Mandeville," *Marco Polo and the Encounter of East and West*, ed. Suzanne Conklin Akbari and Amilcare Iannucci (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008), 133–55; Shayne Aaron Legassie, *The Medieval Invention of Travel* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2017). Despite the slightly different emphasis, see also Christina Henss, *Fremde Räume, Religionen und Rituale in Mandevilles »Reisen«: Wahrnehmung und Darstellung religiöser und kultureller Alterität in den deutschsprachigen Übersetzungen. Quellen und Forschungen zur Literatur- und Kulturgeschichte*, 90 (Berlin and Boston: Walter de Gruyter, 2018).

<sup>427</sup> Shirin A. Khanmohamadi, *In Light of Another's Word* (see note 155), 113–44. She insightfully concludes: "He thus practices a deconstructive ethnography that turns 'otherness' on its head, revealing it as a construct emerging out of the very mechanics of faulty human perspective rather than as born of necessity or truth" (144).

<sup>428</sup> Paul Freedman, *Out of the East* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2008);

Western perceptions, reflecting a wide range of dreams and fantasies, and cannot yet say much about Eastern responses to the West.<sup>429</sup> In any case, imagination always matters centrally in all those efforts to come to terms with different cultures, peoples, languages, literatures, religions, and the arts.<sup>430</sup>

By the same token, modern interests in fantasy literature, films, or video games mirror this curious phenomenon; people obviously prefer literary or cinematic manifestations of their own imagination, not serious scholarly ruminations. Tragically, we might say, reality is dangerously trumped by fantasy, and medieval authors were as much aware of this phenomenon as their modern successors. The reasons behind this great emphasis on imagination certainly differ from culture to culture, from period to period (religion vs. escapism, quest for higher spirituality vs. simple entertainment, for instance), but the curious contrast between reality and fantasy deliberately played out in various genres remains a common thread throughout the history of human culture.

Motifs, images, topoi, themes, even values and ideals might change from people to people, from epoch to epoche, but the correlation between the imaginary and the real proves to be a constant and fundamental function we can never ignore. A dragon can appear as dangerous and murderous or as a protector and helper (such as in China), but it still remains an imaginary creature (see Figs. 4 and 5). Dwarfs might play a threatening, cunning role, or as welcoming hosts offering refuge to an exile, but they are always associated with

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**429** Reza Taher-Kermani, *The Persian Presence in Victorian Poetry* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2020). I thank the author for giving me access to his book manuscript while he was preparing it for publication. We got to know each other during my stay as guest professor at Nazarbayev University in Nur-Sultan, Kazakhstan, in July 2019. I would like to express my gratitude to Nazarbayev University for its hospitality and the University of Arizona for sending me to this Central Asian country. As to the European perceptions of the Asian world and its various non-Islamic religions since the late eighteenth century, see Urs App, *The Birth of Orientalism. Encounters with Asia* (Philadelphia, PA, and Oxford: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010). He offers a critique of Edward Said's position (*Orientalism* [London: Routledge, 1978]), but he is not concerned with the pre-modern world and the question of imagination.

**430** Laurence Lockhart, "Persia as Seen by the West," *The Legacy of Persia*, ed. Arthur John Arberry (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1953), 318–58; Hasan Javadi, *Persian Literary Influence on English Literature: with Special Reference to the Nineteenth Century* (Costa Mesa, CA: Mazda Publishers, 2005); Chloë Houston, "'Thou glorious kingdom, thou chiefe of Empires': Persia in Early Seventeenth-Century Travel Literature," *Studies in Travel Writing* 13 (2009): 141–52; Rudi Matthee, "The Safavids under Western Eyes: Seventeenth-Century European Travelers to Iran," *Journal of Early Modern History* 13 (2009): 137–71; Jane Grogan, *The Persian Empire in English Renaissance Writing, 1549–1622. Early Modern Literature in History* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014).

a fanciful and fantastic realm of their own, mostly below the earth or in a distant forest, and are thus constantly reminders of an alternative dimension of living space.<sup>431</sup> In short, human culture has always been deeply determined by imagination, as demonstrated by religion, literature, music, the visual arts, and philosophy, not to speak of scientific or medical discoveries.

Understanding and accepting this perspective and approach to Medieval and Early Modern Studies at large, has also remarkable consequences and implications for us today. Much of what we know about the past is the result of our construction, both scholarly and in a popular fashion. We imagine the Middle Ages, for instance, by way of looking and studying a selection of texts, images, and objects, trying to make sense out of the flood of data and thus forming a concept of medieval mentality, emotions, and fantasy. This is not to say at all that everything we thought we knew about the past is nothing but imagination. But facts and fiction have always played hand in hand, and the more we understand about our own strategies to come to terms with previous worlds in epistemological terms, the better we can also teach and explain them to the new generations and thus build a basis for future societies.

Once we have accepted that people in the past were also deeply determined by their imagination and fantasy, we can establish much better bridges to them and recognize the fundamental human dimension of all our critical efforts.<sup>432</sup>

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**431** Claude Lecouteux, *Les nains et les elfes au moyen age*. 2nd ed. (1988; Paris: Ed. Imago, 1997); Evgen Tarantul, *Elfen, Zwerge und Riesen: Untersuchung zur Vorstellungswelt germanischer Völker im Mittelalter*. Europäische Hochschulschriften. Reihe 1: Deutsche Sprache und Literatur, 1791 (Frankfurt a. M.: Peter Lang, 2001); Isabel Habicht, *Der Zwerg als Träger meta-fiktionaler Diskurse in deutschen und französischen Texten des Mittelalters*. Germanisch-romanische Monatsschrift: Beiheft, 38 (Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag Winter, 2010); for the modern figure of the dwarf, see Hans Rudolf Velten, "Figurationen des Zwerges in mittelalterlicher Literatur und im Fantasyroman: Tolkien, Heitz, Rehfeld," *Die Literatur des Mittelalters im Fantasyroman – Formen einer populären Rezeption*, ed. Nathanael Busch and Hans Rudolf Velten. Reihe Siegen, 176. Germanistische Abteilung (Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag Winter, 2018), 111–29. For a definitive study of this huge topic, see Werner Schäfke, "Dwarves, Trolls, Ogres, and Giants," *Handbook of Medieval Culture: Fundamental Aspects and Conditions of the European Middle Ages*, ed. Albrecht Classen. Vol. 1 (Berlin and Boston: Walter de Gruyter, 2015), 347–83. As to the notion of a hollow space underneath the earth's surface, as it was already propagated in the Middle Ages and far into the modern age (Anthonius Kircher), see Scott G. Bruce, "*Sunt altera nobis sidera*" (see note 126).

**432** See the contributions to *Das Mittelalter zwischen Vorstellung und Wirklichkeit: Probleme, Perspektiven und Anstöße für die Unterrichtspraxis*, ed. Thomas Martin Buck and Nicola Brauch (Münster, New York, et al.: Waxmann, 2011). See also the seminal study by Johannes Fried, *Die Aktualität des Mittelalters: gegen die Überheblichkeit unserer Wissensgesellschaft*. 3rd ed. (2002; Stuttgart: Thorbecke, 2003), who is warning us from distancing ourselves too excessively from

Granted, their imagination often differed considerably from ours, but in essence, the archetypes continue to be the same, whether we think of dragons, dwarfs, giants, or the various water nymphs, such as Melusine (logo of Starbucks), Undine, or other nixies. Tolkien and Rowling, for instance, would not have had such global success if they could not have drawn from a shared heritage which is much more universal than just the European Middle Ages. We don't have to subscribe entirely to Carl Gustav Jung's concept of the archetypes, for instance, but there is no doubt that universal images and sentiments can be found throughout time, as the deep fascination with water, the foundation of all life, and its inhabitants indicates.<sup>433</sup> Of course, the world is not exclusively an illusion. However, much of our understanding of this world is predicated on our own projections, hence our imagination, and our fantasy.

Shakespeare deserves particular credit for having transposed medieval fantasy and concepts of magic onto the early modern stage, where the differences between dream and reality, illusion and perception prove to be rather ambivalent and amorphous. Imagination holds strong sway here, as is also the case in German or Spanish Baroque theater.<sup>434</sup> Human existence is determined to a large extent by our mental creativity, our intellectual freedom, on our dreams, fears, and sentiments, and this already in the pre-modern age. To quote Thomas Merton one more time, who takes the entire notion of imagination to a higher, spiritual level:

Pure interior solitude is found in the virtue of hope. Hope takes us entirely out of this world while we remain bodily in the midst of it. Our minds retain their clear view of what

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our own past. Humans have always dreamt, and as good cultural historians, we are, of course, deeply interested in medieval dreams and fantastic concepts. For a solid overview, see Jan Wehrle, "Dreams and Dream Theory," *Handbook of Medieval Culture: Fundamental Aspects and Conditions of the European Middle Ages*, ed. Albrecht Classen. Vol. 1 (Berlin and Boston: Walter de Gruyter, 2015), 329–46.

**433** Sibylle Selbmann, *Mythos Wasser: Symbolik und Kulturgeschichte* (Karlsruhe: Badenia-Verlag, 1995); Albrecht Classen, *Water in Medieval Literature* (see note 374). We are dealing here with profound mythical notions of great relevance. The relationship between water and people has always constituted a fundamental aspect of human culture. See, for instance, Terje Tvedt, *Water and Society: Changing Perceptions of Social and Historical Development* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2016).

**434** Sibylle Baumbach, "Frühe Neuzeit: England" (see note 23), 27; see also Louis Vax, *L'art et la littérature fantastiques*. Que sais-je?, 907 (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1960); Marianne Wünsch, *Die fantastische Literatur der Frühen Moderne (1890–1930): Definition, Denkgeschichtlicher Kontext, Strukturen* (Munich: Wilhelm Fink, 1991); *Nach Todorov: Beiträge zu einer Definition des Phantastischen in der Literatur*, ed. Clemens Ruthner (Tübingen: Francke, 2006). See now the contributions to *The Cambridge Companion to Fantasy Literature*, ed. Edward James and Farah Mendlesohn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012).



is good in creatures. Our wills remain chaste and solitary in the midst of all created beauty, not wounded in an isolation that is prudish and ashamed, but lifted up to Heaven by a humility that hope has divested of all bitterness, all consolation, and all fear.<sup>435</sup>

As recent discoveries of prehistoric cave drawings in the cave Leang Bulu' Sipong 4 (Sulawesi, Indonesia), ca. 40,000 years old, have confirmed, human fantasy and imagination have not developed at any specific time, but have always been around and can now be identified as a critical component of the human mind. We are wired, so to speak, to dream, to come up with new ideas, and to imagine.<sup>436</sup>

Hybridity was apparently of greatest interest to stone-age people, but we find it also in countless medieval manuscript illuminations, and even children today delight very much in art work that combines human body part with those of animals or plants. As the scientific authors now comment:

Although the meanings of the imagery are uncertain and likely to remain so, this rock art scene may be regarded not only as the earliest dated figurative art in the world but also as the oldest evidence for the communication of a narrative in Palaeolithic art. This is noteworthy, given that the ability to invent fictional stories may have been the last and most crucial stage in the evolutionary history of human language and the development of modern-like patterns of cognition. The figures that we interpret as therianthropes are also the earliest images of this kind yet discovered. These figures are perhaps twice as old as the 'birdman' in the much-discussed shaft scene at Lascaux, and at least several millennia older than the iconic lion-headed figurine from Aurignacian Germany. Our findings therefore further suggest that the first known indication of religious-like thinking – the ability to conceive of non-real entities such as therianthropes comes not from Europe as has long been assumed, but occurs at least 43.9 ka in Sulawesi. The conspicuousness of therianthropes in the oldest recorded hunting scenes also offers hints at the deeply rooted symbolism of the human–animal bond and predator–prey relationships in the spiritual beliefs, narrative traditions and image-making practices, of our species.<sup>437</sup>

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**435** Merton, *No Man is an Island* (see note 7), 253. See also Karen-Claire Voss, "Imagination in Mysticism and Esotericism" (see note 217). Cf. also the profound studies by Mircea Eliade, *The Sacred and Profane*, trans. Willard R. Trask (1957; New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1957), 20–65 et passim.

**436** Maxime Aubert, Rustan Lebe, Adhi Agus Oktaviana, Muhammad Tang, et al., "Earliest Hunting Scene in Prehistoric Art," *Nature* (2019) doi:10.1038/s41586-019-1806-y (last accessed on Feb. 18, 2020).

**437** For further elaboration on the universal evolution of language, imagination, and concepts, see B. Boyd, "The Evolution of Stories: From Mimesis to Language, From Fact to Fiction," *Wiley Interdiscip. Rev. Cogn. Sci.* 9.1 (2018), doi: 10.1002/wcs.1444 (last accessed on Feb. 18, 2020). This is the first reference offered by the authors of the previous article, "Earliest Hunting Scene in Prehistoric Art" (see note 436).

In short, if we want to understand human culture and history, we must always keep the huge role of imagination and fantasy in mind; they have always mattered profoundly.

## Summaries of the Contributions with Further Reflections

The following articles in this volume offer a wide range of approaches to this central issue, shedding much light on the many different facets of imagination and fantasy at work in the Middle Ages and the early modern age, both in Europe and in the Middle East. Below I do not intend simply to summarize each contribution at length; instead I will engage with it and reflect upon the relevance of the individual piece for the larger effort of the entire book. The effort to interact closely with each contribution separately served me exceedingly well to challenge the authors one more time and to verify whether the argument was clearly developed. I always made an effort to expand on the research offered by each contributor, as is then reflected in the footnotes. So, the term ‘summary’ might not be quite appropriate, while ‘review’ also does not quite cover it.

Insofar as the topic, “Imagination and Fantasy,” appears to be rather open-ended, it was not easy to establish the common ground and to create meaningful connections. Those, however, certainly exist, and this also far beyond the traditional European framework, which makes perfect sense because we are pursuing here Cultural History, which requires the inclusion of many different facets in literature, religion, the visual arts, philosophy, and travel writing, and thus also the products of the human mind to be found all over the world. With the help of the roadmap developed here, we will be in a good position to contextualize each individual contribution and embed it within the larger framework pursued here.<sup>438</sup> It is obvious and quite natural that many contemporary phenomena in medieval China, Japan, or in medieval Africa could not be included, otherwise this project would never have seen the light of the day. But the insights and observations developed here promise to be far-reaching and relevant for non-western culture as well.

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<sup>438</sup> See now also the contributions to *La Raison du merveilleux à la fin du Moyen Âge et dans la première modernité* (see note 16). The range of topics dealt with there, however, does not seem to create a consistent thematic unity, apart from the transculturally shared marveling and the discourse about the marvels and miracles.

How do we even know that the world we live in does not represent a dream, while we operate on the stage of a dreamer and are nothing but the result of imagination and fantasy? What are dreams, in the first place, and how would we define reality? Those are profound and probably not answerable questions pondered already since the time of Greek antiquity and early medieval Arabic culture, as David Bennett and Filip Radovic explore in the first contribution to this volume. Both modern neuroscience and psychology have realized already for a long time the extreme importance of sleep and hence also of dreams, but these two scholars turn their attention to the reflections on the nature and property of dreams containing truth as developed in the Aristotelian and the Arabic traditions (Avicenna). Surprisingly, as Bennett and Radovic uncover, the discourse on veridical dreams and reality today can be easily traced back to antiquity without having experienced extreme changes; the challenge to come to terms with these phenomena continue to be the same throughout time, though cultural responses differed, of course.

In their study, they examine the Arabic adaptation of the collection of Aristotelian treatises, collectively known as *Parva naturalia*, where we learn that at times the spiritual perception of things could be regarded as more noble than reality itself, as was expounded especially by al-Kindī (d. ca. 870 C.E.) and his students, according to whom the dream reality was intrinsically true, although this led to a host of new interpretive problems, as the vast discourse on dreams throughout the Middle Ages and beyond clearly indicates. We might not quite understand this today, ordinarily facing chaotic and disturbing dreams, but the Arabic philosophers, following the ancient Greek tradition, perceived dreams in rather specific terms as meaningful and indicative of something relevant, in fact, as more perceptive than corporeal sensation, an approach which was strongly imitated in the Middle Ages and later periods as well.<sup>439</sup>

Bennett and Radovic focus, above all, on the teachings of al-Kindī for whom the experience of dreams connected the individual more closely with the own soul and also the divine. To some extent, followers such as al-Fārābī and Avicenna tended to agree with him at least in that respect. The latter went so far as to identify dreaming as a catalyst for epistemology, that is, for the soul to communicate with the divine, which subsequent medieval philosophers and poets in the Latin West also embraced as a fundamental aspect in many of their texts. But there were also critical voices, such as al-Ghazālī's (d. 1111), who viewed his predecessors' position with much suspicion, almost being an early

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**439** See also the contributions to this volume by Christa Agnes Tuczay (Middle High German texts) and Emmy Herland (Baroque Spanish drama). In both cases, the veridical nature of dreams is also discussed controversially by the various poets.

Cartesian long before the age of Enlightenment. By contrast, famous Averroes (d. 1198) insisted that some dreams have certainly prophetic qualities, which finds its resonance in much of medieval literature, because humans are endowed with the power of imagination and fantasy, that is, with spiritual gateways to the divine, and this very much in the vein of Platonic and then especially Aristotelian thinking (sense perception), as reflected in the Arabic *Parva naturalia*. This new observation found its maybe most vivid expression in Synesius of Cyrene's (ca. 370–413) *De insomniis* and in Priscian's *Answers to King Khosroes of Persia* (531), according to which the soul, freed from its material burden (the body) during sleep, would be empowered to reach out to the spiritual dimension. However, human imagination proves to be too weak to process clearly enough the truth in those dreams.

Although modern medicine has achieved huge progress in understanding the etiology of many physical problems, it is abundantly clear that the complexity of the human body, colonized by billions of germs, viruses, and bacteria, among other microscopic creatures, mostly prevents us from fully understanding the causes or symptoms even of our common sicknesses and illnesses. Moreover, body and mind interact in ways that are often rather impossible to comprehend or to analyze, and the best our doctors can do is to apply what they have learned in school and through their own experiences and then hope that their efforts will have the desired effect.

Prior to the modern age, medical doctors already tried very hard to trace the etiology of the many sicknesses their patients suffered from, but due to their inability to comprehend exactly the microbiological conditions, they resorted to analogies often based on imaginary concepts, in essence on Galen's teachings of the four humors.<sup>440</sup> As Chiara Benati demonstrates in her contribution, many physical problems, such as tooth-aches or headaches, skin rashes, and other dermatological problems, but then also severe infections or intoxications, various illnesses, and so forth were explained by reference to all kinds of worms that could be invoked by means of charms, which then would force those worms to move out of the body, allowing the patient to regain his/her health.<sup>441</sup>

From the perspective of modern medicine, none of those concepts seem to make sense, as there are really no worms. Nevertheless, pre-modern physicians clearly understood that the etiology required the assumption of forces that

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**440** *Medicine and Healing in the Premodern West: A History in Documents*, ed. Winston Black. The Broadview Sources Series (Peterborough, Ont.: Broadview Press, 2020), 121–48.

**441** For relevant charms in the Old English *Lacnunga* (tenth century), see *Medicine and Healing in the Premodern World* (see note 440), 143–33.

came from outside of the body that hence had to be removed. Since they lacked the advantages of modern medicine, they resorted to magical charms, for instance, and thus operated, by analogy, quite similarly to their modern colleagues, who use terms such as germs, viruses, and bacteria, equally invisible to the naked eye.

As ridiculous as the notion of worms might have been, at least as perceived from our standpoint today, as relevant it was for the proper treatment of the sick in the pre-modern era. In fact, as Benati claims, by means of their vivid imagination, medieval medical researchers already understood quite well part of the etiology of many illnesses, including of women's death in childbed, although their terminology was rather clumsy and maybe naive, yet quite effective for their own purposes because they could thus correlate a symptom with an image. Each sickness or illness was associated with its own kind of worm, differentiated by its color and shape, so the medical prescriptions were actually not too far off in identifying the kind of physical problems by means of categories of worms. By way of their fanciful terminology, medieval and early modern physicians were thus able to identify specific sicknesses and to associate them with their respective etiology. Their imagination thus paved the way for the future development of modern bacteriology and virology.

Imagination and fantasy are not always simply mental projections of little relevance, playful and creative, bending reality for entertainment's sake. Philosophy and religion, for instance, could not do without them. This also applies to the political discourse where concepts of alternative conditions, criticism of current situations, and the exploration of new approaches to leadership, for instance, matter centrally. Utopias, above all, have always served the purpose of voicing indirect criticism of the *status quo* and to outline different concepts about an ideal form of society, and this also already in the Middle Ages.<sup>442</sup> In the Anglo-Saxon *Beowulf* (ca. 700 C.E.) we can recognize a similar approach, as Edward Currie indicates in his contribution, insofar as the protagonist needs to come to King Hrothgar's rescue and overcome both Grendel and his mother to save that Danish kingdom from extinction brought about by a spree of cannibalism. However, fifty years later, *Beowulf* himself faces an existential threat by the dragon, and then he ultimately fails to overcome the opponent by himself. Instead of asking all of his men to assist him

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<sup>442</sup> *Utopie im Mittelalter: Begriff – Formen – Funktionen*, ed. Heiko Hartmann and Werner Röcke. Das Mittelalter 18.2 (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2013); Heiko Hartmann, "Utopias / Utopian Thought," *Handbook of Medieval Studies: Terms – Methods – Trends*, ed. Albrecht Classen. Vol. 2 (Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2010), 1400–08.

in this most dangerous battle, he believes that he can or rather must handle this monster single-handedly. Yet, he would have almost been killed, if not his nephew Wiglaf had finally intervened and helped him. Beowulf still dies from the dragon's poison, and thus he leaves his people behind leaderless. Moreover, as Currie emphasizes, Beowulf refuses to listen to any advice, with the expected fiasco as the outcome of his final battle, despite the dragon's death, so this epic poem could be read as an early version of the medieval *Mirror for Princes*, warning the audience against the use of violence.<sup>443</sup>

Icelandic literary texts, such as *The Njál's Saga* or *Atlaqviða*, underscore the great need to listen to the good advice of trustworthy counselors. But there could also be evil counselors, such as Starkad, who appears not only in *Beowulf*, but also in a number of other Old Norse sources and who tries to manipulate King Ingeld. This Starkad is a descendant of the God Odin, who himself operates in a rather sly, deceptive, and hypercritical fashion, seeding much distrust and internecine strife among the people. Revenge and counter-revenge are ominously predicted by Beowulf regarding Ingeld, and the poet obviously imagined numerous dangerous developments because of evil advice – certainly a common topic in much of medieval heroic literature, such as in the *Gautreks Saga* or the *Víkarbálkr*, with the influence of Odin on human society always clearly perceptible, causing strife, hatred, and envy not just among some individuals, but among whole groups and even peoples, leading to warfare, sometimes concluding with the mutual destruction, such as in the later *Nibelungenlied* (ca. 1200).<sup>444</sup>

While in *Widsið* a successful war against an opponent is characterized as the outcome of good kingship, in *Beowulf*, the obviously Christian poet projects rather the opposite, outlining what he imagines to be a peaceful rule to the advantage of all subjects. In fact, he perceives grave danger for Heorot and warns

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<sup>443</sup> This finds its expression in many other medieval narratives; see the contributions to *War and Peace in the Middle Ages*, ed. Brian Patrick McGuire (Copenhagen: Reitzel, 1987); cf. also Albrecht Classen, "Krieg im Mittelalter und seine Kritik in literarischen Werken des deutschsprachigen Raumes," *Zeitschrift für Literaturwissenschaft und Linguistik* 28.109 (1998): 7–37; id., "Eine einsame Stimme für den Frieden im Mittelalter Der erstaunliche Fall von *Kudrun*," *Thallorís* 1 (2016): 69–90. See also the contributions to *War and Peace: Critical Issues in European Societies and Literature, 800–1800*, ed. Albrecht Classen and Nadia Margolis. *Fundamentals of Medieval and Early Modern Culture*, 8 (Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2011); Gregory M. Reichberg, *Thomas Aquinas on War and Peace* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017).

<sup>444</sup> Rachel Stone, *Morality and Masculinity in the Carolingian Empire*. *Cambridge Studies in Medieval Life and Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011); Albrecht Classen, "The Principles of Honor, Virtue, Leadership, and Ethics" (see note 1).

about deadly strife and fire destroying the kingdom in the future because of profound discord among the various political parties at court. Treaties, peace accords, and a firm leadership emerge as the ideals in *Beowulf* and other Old Norse epic poems, but there are also many allusions to possible dangers resulting from blood feud, revenge, greed, hatred, and other sinful emotions and actions.

There is nothing of the nice, soft, sweet, child-like fantasy we moderns tend to associate the word with. But the political fantasy, the imagination of a better world with less military conflicts and revenge, freed from Odinic hatred and envy, emerges as the ideal projected by the *Beowulf* poet. There are intriguing parallels to the near contemporary Old High German “Hildebrandslied,” where the disaster of father and son fighting and probably killing each other serves as a powerful foil for the political discourse in ninth-century Germany. Heroic poetry thus proves to be not simply a genre glorifying war, fighting, and battle, but also, if not even much more so, as a literary projection of a politically stable and peaceful world with good counselors and trustworthy kings.<sup>445</sup> In short, as Currie informs us, the *Beowulf* poet challenged his audience to dream of, or imagine an alternative political world than the one dominated by heroic struggles and self-centered military operations in their historical reality.

However, as in all cases of monster lore, we are also challenged to investigate closely what the monstrous means by itself in the first place, as previous scholars have already highlighted and discussed in various ways. Daniel F. Pigg raises this question anew regarding Grendel and Grendel’s mother in the Anglo-Saxon *Beowulf*, probing for us how imagination operated in this famous heroic epic. As he suggests, we must consider, above all, that the poet projected concepts of the monstrous that were obviously shared by his audiences. It is just not good enough simply to assume that Grendel is a monstrous creature that devours human beings, a cannibal of ancient times haunting King Hrothgar’s royal court, Heorot. As Pigg’s analysis lays bare, there are many layers of meaning behind the Grendels, as he almost charmingly calls this family (mother and son), since allegory matters centrally in the discussion of those two monsters who threaten the existence of human society by killing and eating Hrothgar’s men until Beowulf comes to the rescue and overcomes both, slaughtering both. The very ambiguity of these two figures allows for many different interpretations, both contemporary and modern, since they could be associated

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<sup>445</sup> Albrecht Classen, “Why Do Their Words Fail? Communicative Strategies in the *Hildebrandslied*,” *Modern Philology* 93 (1995): 1–22; see also id., *Verzweiflung und Hoffnung. Die Suche nach der kommunikativen Gemeinschaft in der deutschen Literatur des Mittelalters*. Beihefte zur Mediaevistik, 1 (Frankfurt a. M., Berlin, et al.: Peter Lang, 2002).

with the fens, the swamps, water, night, wetness altogether, and hence also with plague, disease, and death, hence sinfulness, carnality, and death.<sup>446</sup>

As to Grendel, there is the tricky issue of his glove, which would connect him uncannily with humankind and human culture. But he operates as the absolute other and cannot be imagined as a real part of heroic society. He could be identified as the descendant of Cain, he could be the opponent of heroism as represented by Beowulf, or he could serve as the monstrous configuration of paganism against which a savior-figure like Beowulf has to come to the rescue.<sup>447</sup> There could be, oddly, closer links between the protagonist and the monster, which would explain why Beowulf fights against Grendel with his bare hands, and why he ultimately also dies once he has killed the dragon. Beowulf's sword fails against the mother, and only with the help of an ancient weapon he finds in the cave can he defeat her. The anonymous poet, probably a monk, certainly perceived in all those horrifying creatures symbols of chaos that affected the entire world, which would underscore the epic poem's function to give expression to universal imagination, fantasy, and especially fear and deep anxiety of the ultimate Other in the underworld, that is, in the depth of human existence. In this respect, *Beowulf* actually emerges as a fascinating literary experiment with cultural epistemology, in which an obviously Christian poet engaged with ancient pagan concepts and images in order to provide a meaningful segue to the teachings of the Christian Church, the safe haven protecting the individual from natural and spiritual chaos.

Comparing *Beowulf* with some Old Norse sagas, such as *Grettis Saga*, Pigg observes that the concept of cannibalism is present also in other early medieval texts, which all utilize this phenomenon to address the fundamental conflicts between enculturation and the maintenance of the ancient practices and values of a pagan world. But we also need to keep in mind that neither Grendel nor his mother are completely alien to human culture; they share certain emotions (mother-son), they express fear of a superior opponent, and they fight their enemy with all their might. Thus, the fact that Grendel has to leave behind a glove indicates that these

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**446** Rod Giblett, "Theology of Wetlands: Tolkien and *Beowulf* on Marshes and their Monsters," *Green Letters: Studies in Ecocriticism* 19.2 (2015): 132–43; see also the contribution to this volume by Warren Tormey.

**447** For relevant parallels, see G. Ronald Murphy, S.J., *The Saxon Savior: The Germanic Transformation of the Gospel in the Ninth-Century Heliand* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989); id., *Tree of Salvation: Yggdrasil and the Cross in the North* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013); Prisca Augustyn, *The Semiotics of Fate, Death, and the Soul in Germanic Culture: The Christianization of Old Saxon*. Berkeley Insights in Linguistics and Semiotics, 50 (New York, Washington, DC, et al.: Peter Lang, 2002);



monsters obviously share more with the humans in this epic poem than we might have assumed, which allows us even further to recognize in them allegories of sinfulness, monstrosity, and sheer evil. It makes thus good sense to perceive in *Beowulf* an attempt to reflect upon the dangerous and evil dimensions of human nature; Cain is in all of us. Even though Beowulf overcomes the two Grendels, son and mother, there is a strong sense, as Pigg alerts us, that the otherness which they represent in cultural terms, continues to exist and cannot be buried until also Beowulf has succumbed to death following the bite by the dragon fifty years later.

Imagination and fantasy were surprisingly effective tools in early medieval proselytizing activities in England and Ireland insofar as the patristic authors made strong efforts to combine in a syncretizing fashion traditional pagan concepts with their own Christian teaching, often using the trope of the 'otherworld journey' or 'hell tour' as a medium to correlate pagan notions of the afterworld with those relevant for Christianity. Warren Tormey takes into consideration the borderland situation in the far western parts of Europe where early Church writers tried to explain the essence of their soteriology to their new parishes by means of images derived from ancient monster lore and demonology.<sup>448</sup> In the Anglo-Saxon *Wanderer* and the *Seafarer*, and in the works by the Venerable Bede, in the *Life of St. Guthlac* by the little known cleric Felix, and by the anonymous Latin writer of the highly popular *Navigatio Sancti Brendani Abbatis*, translated into virtually all European languages, do we encounter examples of this 'journey to hell' motif, which is also of great relevance in *Beowulf*. Merging pagan with Christian concepts, all these narratives strongly insinuate to their audiences how the individual pilgrim can make his/her way down to hell, encounter monstrous creatures or demons, overcome them, or leave them behind, and return to firm ground, where salvation is waiting for him/her. The various poets knew well how to combine the actual presence of swampy fens, moors, and other wetlands at the border of human settlements with a spiritual interpretation of the pagan gods and evil demons, drawing also from biblical and apocryphal texts, and thus they succeeded in their consistent and long-term efforts to missionize and convert the formerly pagan population. Textual strategies carefully predicated on a variety of sources and practical operations to correlate the struggles to set up monasteries and to teach and convert the native population succeeded in tandem, making the motif of the 'hell tour' a

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**448** For analogous cases especially in the early modern age, see the contributions to *Monsters and Borders in the Early Modern Imagination*, ed. Jana Byars and Hans Peter Broedel. Routledge Studies in Cultural History (New York and London: Routledge, 2018).

highly effective tool for the early medieval Church. Those who travel to the depth of the earth witness the harrowing of hell and resurface as the blessed ones, leaving behind the condemned sinners and unbelievers.

Consistently, those Anglo-Saxon authors projected the pagan others as monsters and fragmented beings that ultimately fall by the wayside, whereas the Christian protagonist emerges triumphantly, which is also expressed vividly in *Beowulf* and especially in Brother Felix's *Life of St. Guthlac* with its apocalyptic concepts as we are finding it highly vividly expressed once again at the end of the Middle Ages in many Day of Judgment triptychs, such as the one by Hans Memling (between 1467 and 1471) and Hieronymus Bosch (see above), who in a way simply continued with those traditions as outlined by Tormey and combined them with new grotesque and monstrous features.<sup>449</sup> However, the negative portrayal of the heathens during that early phase strongly smacks of colonialist interests in those borderlands reflected in those texts studied by Tormey. Those who journey down to hellish abyss, and then return successfully, constitute the new Christian kingdom even in the peripheral borderlands. Little wonder that consequently the *Navigatio sancti Brendani abbatis* gained so much popularity all over medieval Europe and beyond, providing a stunning range of images about the Christian protagonist and the heathen others that must simply be left behind as remnants of hell.<sup>450</sup> Indeed, in terms of the battle for the people's souls, the early Christian missionaries and authors fully embraced the notion of hell as a strong visual deterrent and elaborated it most creatively as a horrendous and yet powerful sphere, combining elements of the traditional *Immram* of Celtic myth with the Christian (apocryphal) *Visio Sancti Pauli* from the third century.

Human imagination tends to manifest itself across the globe in rather similar terms, and despite strong language differences, it is not too far-fetched to consider ideas of monstrosity, hybridity, the devil, deviation, transgression of norms, and

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<sup>449</sup> Stefan Fischer, *Im Irrgarten der Bilder* (see note 417), 83: "Seit den Anfängen der Menschheit ist das Groteske, Hybride oder Monströse in Form verzerrter Menschendarstellungen, Mischwesen und Fabelwesen kulturübergreifend etwas, das die Grenze von der alltäglichen zur jenseitigen Sphäre, also der des Geistigen und Vorstellbaren, des Sakralen und des Göttlichen markiert" (Since the beginning of mankind, the grotesque, the hybrid, and the monstrous have been, in the form of a distorted presentation of people, hybrid beings, and fabulous creatures, commonly shared across cultures and marked the border between the everyday world and the transcendental sphere, that is, of the spiritual and the imaginative, of the sacred and the divine).

<sup>450</sup> *The Voyage of Saint Brendan: Representative Versions of the Legend in English Translation with Indexes of Themes and Motifs from the Stories*, ed. W. R. J. Barron and Glyn S. Burgess (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2002).

deep-seated fantasy also in medieval Persian literature, such as Firdawsī's New Persian epic poem, the *Shāhnāmāh* (*Book of Kings*), from the early eleventh century. In his contribution, Robert Landau Ames offers a detailed analysis of this major Persian text not only as to its use of imaginary concepts about monstrosity, but also as to its didactic function similar to a *Mirror for Princes*.

In Marie de France's "Bisclavret" (ca. 1190) the monstrous werewolf finds refuge with the king and is eventually rescued from its bestial figure because of the king's wisdom and open-mindedness makes it possible for him to perceive the monster's inner being. In Firdawsī's text, by contrast, the king himself turns into a hybrid monster, with snakes growing out of his shoulders that must be fed with the brain of young main to avoid causing the king unbearable pain. Only after thousand years, a native Iranian, Faraydūn, can join a successful rebellion and imprison this horrible and man-slaughtering king under a sacred mountain.

Human imagination has consistently drawn from the world of monsters, and this in all cultures throughout time. So, it does not come as a surprise that Firdawsī operates with such concepts in his critical approach to this horrible royal usurper who had committed regicide and patricide to gain full control of the throne. Whereas ancient Persian, that is, Zoroastrian, models had depicted this king as a monster through and through, in Firdawsī's version he is first human but then transmogrifies into a hybrid creature who is the worst possible ruler. His monstrosity proves to be the outward demonstration of his vile and immoral character, whereas in "Bisclavret" the werewolf maintains his inner virtuosity and only needs to gain access to his clothing again (human civilization) in order to recover his human shape.

As Landau Ames can identify, the *Shāhnāmāh* increasingly functionalizes the king's monstrous features and behavior as indicators of his moral and ethical failures.<sup>451</sup> The epic poem thus allows us to comprehend more in depth how in the Persian context imaginary concepts of an evil, even murderous king could contribute to a critical discussion of the fundamental ethics of royal

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<sup>451</sup> I have argued along the same lines in a previous study dealing with western medieval monsters, see Albrecht Classen, "The Epistemological Function of Monsters in the Middle Ages: From *The Voyage of Saint Brendan* to *Herzog Ernst*, Marie de France, Marco Polo and John Mandeville. What Would We Be Without Monsters in Past and Present!" *Lo Sguardo: Rivista di filologia* 9.2 (2012): 13–34 [https://www.academia.edu/6744378/The\\_Epistemological\\_Function\\_of\\_Monsters\\_in\\_the\\_Middle\\_Ages\\_From\\_The\\_Voyage\\_of\\_Saint\\_Brendan\\_to\\_Herzog\\_Ernst\\_Marie\\_de\\_France\\_Marco\\_Polo\\_and\\_John\\_Mandeville\\_What\\_Would\\_We\\_Be\\_Without\\_Monsters\\_in\\_Past\\_and\\_Present\\_](https://www.academia.edu/6744378/The_Epistemological_Function_of_Monsters_in_the_Middle_Ages_From_The_Voyage_of_Saint_Brendan_to_Herzog_Ernst_Marie_de_France_Marco_Polo_and_John_Mandeville_What_Would_We_Be_Without_Monsters_in_Past_and_Present_) (last accessed on Feb. 18, 2020).

rulership. Landau Ames then connects this aspect with the world of modern sci-fi horror where the absolute other is made up of beings and objects that we as humans cannot comprehend. The monster in the medieval Persian epic constitutes such an epistemological challenge, consumed by absolute greed and the desire to live and thus to feed the snakes on its shoulders with young men's brains. The poet's message clearly aimed at teaching a fundamental lesson about good kingship (mirror for princes), but this works out here only because the imagined monster constitutes the totally other of a virtuous ruler, a counter-sovereign, as Landau-Ames calls him. The king is so horrendous not because he is a monster, from birth, as in modern science fiction (Lovecraft etc.), but because he turns into a monster through the devil's machinations, which thus exposes the king's evil character. We would not go too far to claim that ultimately the familiarity of the monster creates the real horror. In short, human imagination can take us far beyond all human dimensions and confront us with utter alterity, but then we are pretty much lost and might no longer care fully, as in modern science fiction. Our fantasy only exerts its real impact when it continues to be connected with our concrete existence to some extent.

Both theology and philosophy are critically predicated on imagination and fantasy. Thinking about God is a fundamental operation in all religions, but it is virtually impossible in human language to come to terms with this idea. By the same token, many poets find themselves in at times impossible conditions when they experience a dramatic paradigm shift and observe themselves as being at a loss in their own lives. This was apparently very much the case with the famous first *troubadour* poet, William IX (d. 1126), whose mysterious song "Farai un vers de dreit nien" addresses the nothingness, the ultimate ineffability of the human language, as Fidel Fajardo-Acosta comments in his contribution. He notices a larger tradition from John Scotus Eriugena's *De divisione naturae* to Meister Eckhart, who all explored a form of negative theology because they realized that human language is not capable of coming to terms with God.

Similarly, William addresses, long before modern times, nothingness as an existential phenomenon, thereby anticipating modern philosophy by such luminaries as Ludwig Wittgenstein and Jacques Derrida more than eight hundred years earlier. Despite his highly influential efforts to develop love poems, William obviously sensed the loss of his independence in political terms, realizing the emergence of the new kingdoms in the high Middle Ages, while at the same time trying to compensate the disappearance of aristocratic freedom by way of substituting this loss with the quest for courtly love.

Combining the discussion of nothingness with imaginary love mirrors, as Fajardo-Acosta confirms, the sense of forlornness in a transforming courtly

culture, as much as William was certainly the leader of his dukedom. It does not seem to be an accident, however, that John Scotus Eriugena's influential ideas circulated in William's time in paraphrases like Honorius Augustodunensis's *Clavis physicae*, opening significant theological perspectives that resonated with William's thinking in secular terms, especially because he, like the Middle High German poet Walther von der Vogelweide almost hundred years after him,<sup>452</sup> questioned the meaning of love and faced the dilemma of understanding it deeply and being dumbfounded by it at the same time. The fantasized nothingness thus appears to be an intriguing, truly elegant poetic response, a poetic reflection of the apophatic nature of love, and this in a radically changing world during the early twelfth century.<sup>453</sup>

With respect to the poet's love experience, however, the notion of nothingness on his side also underscored how much he was dependent on his mistress and regarded himself as void of an identity without her. After all, as we know also from a variety of other contemporary poems by Marcabru or Bernart Marti, love is evanescent and incomprehensible, so the imagination of nothingness in this case makes very good sense and highlights William's poetic brilliance, who skillfully resorted to his own literary fantasy at a time when new power consolidations, such as those taking place in Anjou, threatened his own public position in Poitou. If we extend the logic developed by Fajardo-Acosta, then the absolute impossibility to make final sense out of Andreas Capellanus's famous treatise on love, *De amore* (ca. 1180) because of the completely contradictory nature of books one and two versus book three leads into a form of intellectual nothingness with a lot of meaning.<sup>454</sup>

Undoubtedly, William's poem represents a literary riddle, and the audience was challenged to find the answer, which rested in their imagination and fantasy, just as in the highly popular pan-European romance of *Apollonius of Tyre* with father and daughter engaged in a sophisticated game of riddles that ultimately rescues him from his deep depression and her from her enforced

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452 "Saget mir ieman, waz ist minne?," Walther von der Vogelweide, *Leich, Lieder, Sangsprüche*. 15th rev. and expanded ed. by Thomas Bein (Berlin and Boston: Walter de Gruyter, 2013), no. 44, or L. 69, 1.

453 Peter Dinzelbacher, *Structures and Origins of the Twelfth-Century 'Renaissance.'* Monographien zur Geschichte des Mittelalters, 63 (Stuttgart: Anton Hiersemann, 2017).

454 Albrecht Classen, "Andreas Capellanus aus kommunikationstheoretischer Sicht. Eine postmoderne Auslegung von 'De amore'," *Mittelalterliches Jahrbuch* 29.1 (1994): 45–60; id., "Epistemology at the Courts: The Discussion of Love by Andreas Capellanus and Juan Ruiz," *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen* CIII.3 (2002): 341–62; id., "Dialectics and Courtly Love: Abelard and Heloise, Andreas Capellanus, and the *Carmina Burana*," *Journal of Medieval Latin* 23 (2013): 161–83.

prostitution.<sup>455</sup> Addressing nothingness in an erotic context thus signals that the poet has embarked on a philosophical, theological, but also very political enterprise engaging with an increasingly alienating environment where meaning became increasingly lost to him, although he continued to play a significant role in the local politics and within the discourse of courtly love.

As much as patriarchy has been the dominant social rule throughout antiquity, the Middle Ages and far beyond (if not until today), male fantasies have regularly imagined powerful, magically endowed, (hybrid) female creatures, such as fairies, mermaids, spirits, and the like, sometimes out of fear, sometimes out of respect, sometimes out of a sense of helplessness, or simply curiosity and sexual attraction.<sup>456</sup> To evaluate those images, expressed in countless literary texts, visual documents, and music, Jessica Zeitler turns her attention to early medieval Andalusí literature preserved in Arabic, especially the *Tales of Ziyad Ibn Amir al-Kinani*, where we encounter not only influential princesses, female warriors, and storytellers, but also mysterious genies, or jinniya. Within the *Tales*, those female protagonists gain considerable freedom, independence, and control and can operate surprisingly on their own.

This theme has reverberated throughout time both in East and West, not to forget other parts of the world, as illustrated, for instance, by the many mysterious Melusine or Undine figures, or the popular mermaids (see the contributions to this volume by Albrecht Classen and Martha Moffit Peacock), and it obviously continues to appeal to modern audiences all over the world, if we think of the 2020 American epic fantasy war drama film *Mulan* directed by Niki Caro, with the screenplay by Rick Jaffa, Amanda Silver, Lauren Hynek and Elizabeth Martin, a live action adaptation of Disney's eponymous 1998 animated film.<sup>457</sup> If we continued with this line of argument, we would gain rather solid evidence

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<sup>455</sup> Albrecht Classen, "Reading and Deciphering in *Apollonius of Tyre* and the *Historia von den sieben weisen Meistern*: Medieval Epistemology within a Literary Context," *Studi Medievali* 49 (2008): 161–88. See also Rafal Boryslawski, *The Old English Riddles and the Riddlic Elements of Old English Poetry*. Studies in English Medieval Language and Literature, 9 (Frankfurt a. M. and New York: Peter Lang, 2001). Riddles in the form of knots have also to be solved in Marie de France's *lai* "Guigemar" (ca. 1190).

<sup>456</sup> See also the phenomenon of the Amazons, here studied by Isidro Luis Jiménez in his contribution to this volume. Those women were always projected as powerful, fierce, and yet attractive, keeping men in a safe distance, and yet calling upon them to get pregnant once a year. I have also reflected upon them several times above.

<sup>457</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mulan\\_\(2020\\_film\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mulan_(2020_film)) (last accessed on Feb. 18, 2020). See the anthology *Mulan shi. Five Versions of a Classic Chinese Legend with Related Texts*, ed. Shiamin Kwa (Indianapolis, IN, and Cambridge: Hackett, 2010); cf. also Louise Edwards,

to counter claims by scholars such as Jacques Le Goff who seriously questioned the possibility to build epistemological bridges between modern and medieval imagination.<sup>458</sup>

As much as the fundamental context of al-Andalus (Islamic, Jewish, Christian) was often characterized by transgressions or transculturality, as much does the treatment of female figures in the *Tales* open new spaces for women's agency, whether only imagined or as a reflection of actual alternative realities, certainly defying the patriarchal hegemony, such as in the remarkable case of the female poet Wallada bint al-Mustakfi (1001–1091), daughter of the last Umayyad Caliph in Cordoba. Zeitler demonstrates that the main female figures in the *Tales* defy traditional stereotypes and project new opportunities for women, as imaginary and fanciful as those might be, i.e., as warriors, rulers, and shapeshifting genies.

The poet imagined astounding spaces where those female spirits exist and which are not connoted in any negative way, whereas in western medieval literature such conditions are normally viewed ambivalently or with great apprehension, such as in the case of Alexander the Great's meeting with the flower girls (Lambrecht, *Alexander*, see my comments above), the Venus mountain (Tannhäuser), or the world of Melusine and her two sisters (see my contribution to this volume). But in the *Tales*, the genie affirms explicitly that she is a good spirit, which Melusine actually does as well to calm down male fears about her ghostly appearance. For Zeitler, the projection of those mighty, attractive, but also uncanny female figures represents the Nietzschean pendulum swinging between the Apollonian and Dionysian, the desire to join those women, combined with a deep fear of their power over men, all of which takes place in heretofore undefined spaces that grant those women the freedom to enact their own agency, and this in the early medieval Andalusian context with three cultures and religions competing against each other.

As to be expected, the world of imagination and fantasy has always been populated by many different strange creatures, both monstrous and scary, such as dragons and dwarfs, but then also fairies, nixies, undines, and other hybrid beings. Albrecht Classen takes on the challenge of examining a wider range of relevant verse narratives where the latter group of creatures plays a major role. After all, there is hardly any literary text from the Middle Ages and the early modern age where fantasy figures would not emerge and impact the lives of the

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*Women Warriors and Wartime Spies of China* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2016).

**458** See especially the contribution to this volume by Scott L. Taylor.

ordinary protagonists. Little wonder that the Catholic Church struggled so hard to distance itself from popular beliefs (superstition) and yet had to accept, grudgingly, many compromises in order to reach out to the people. After all, until today there is a strong sense, or maybe realization, that human life is not simply determined by materialism, but by spirituality, and the appearance of fairies and similar beings has always helped to explore the connection between human beings and other creatures.

As the common examples in Anglo-Norman (Marie de France), in Welsh (*Mabinogion*), in Middle High German (the *Nibelungenlied*, the *Alexanderlied*), in late medieval English (*Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*), and in late medieval literature at large (*Peter von Staufenberg*, *Melusine*) indicate, the interest in the Otherworld remained unabated throughout the centuries and across all cultures. Even though fairies, for instance, seem to figure today only in literature or films/videos for children, and in related narratives, they continue the same tradition and reveal until today how much imagination and fantasy matter in many different ways. Those figures represent subconscious desires, wishes, fears, anxieties, worries, and the wide range of emotions, so it does not come as a surprise that they emerge also in literature for adults, though then often in a more complex or subtle fashion (e.g., Theodor Fontane, *Der Stechlin*, 1898), yet always situated at a liminal space between rationality and irrationality, between this and another world.

Fairies also represent *Avalon* (Marie de France, “Lanval”), the medieval utopia, and they can predict the future (*Nibelungenlied*). Many times, the human protagonists are extremely attracted to those highly attractive female figures, but as Priest Lambrecht’s *Alexanderlied* signals, even after a lengthy period of sexual encounters, the perceived happiness proves to be an illusion. As the large tradition of *Melusine* romances/novels indicates, they can also command over infinite material resources and are also highly fertile, so they contribute to the foundation of vast dynasties and as such populated many people’s fantasies from the Middle Ages to the modern age. However, as many examples also indicate, the human individual faces severe dangers when one engages with these imaginative characters, either facing one’s own death or the loss of happiness.

Undoubtedly, focusing on fairies and similar figures in pre-modern literature allows us to explore fundamental aspects of the human psyche and also helps us to recognize the profound influence of medieval literature on modern imagination and fantasy.<sup>459</sup> It is, however, also worth to consider that even

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<sup>459</sup> For a broad overview, see Jean N. Goodrich, “Fairy, Elves and the Enchanted Otherworld,” *Handbook of Medieval Culture: Fundamental Aspects and Conditions of the European Middle Ages*, ed. Albrecht Classen. Vol. 1 (Berlin and Boston: Walter de Gruyter, 2015), 431–64. She traces folklorists’ and anthropologists’ interest in fairies and other creatures well into the seventeenth



though most people today would dismiss all notions of fairies as nothing but entertainment material for children, they continue to populate modern imagination more than we might think.<sup>460</sup>

Similar to the myth of Alexander the Great, King Arthur, Emperor Charlemagne, and other mighty figures throughout history, the myth of the Amazons deeply occupied people's minds in the pre-modern era, especially because they challenged traditional concepts of masculinity. This has already been discussed at length in numerous studies, but Isidro Luis Jiménez traces here its dissemination in medieval and early modern Spanish literature,<sup>461</sup> beginning actually with Isidore of Seville (ca. 560–636) and his famous encyclopedia, *Etymologiae*. Amazons were not really monsters, but they lived a different lifestyle at the margin of known humanity, somewhere in the Middle East, and through their assumption of male roles in an exclusively female society they undermined traditional gender categories. As disturbing as their presence might have been for male audiences in the Middle Ages, they certainly appealed to the larger readership, and this also in Spain, maybe just because they challenged male authority and thus titillated male fantasy.

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century. Josine Blok, *The Early Amazons: Modern and Ancient Perspectives on a Persistent Myth* (Leiden and Boston: E. J. Brill, 1995); Stefano Andres, *Le amazzoni nell'immaginario occidentale: il mito e la storia attraverso la letteratura* (Pisa: Edizioni ETS, 2001); see now Jessica Oxendine, "Imagining the Amazon: Monstrous Discourses about Gynocracy in Elizabethan England," *Monsters and Borders in the Early Modern Imagination* (see note 448), 101–15.

**460** For helpful lists of fairies in literature, the arts, movies, and sculptures, among many other media, see *Fairy Lore: A Handbook*, ed. Dee L. Ashliman. Greenwood Folklore Handbooks (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 2006); Richard Sugg, *Fairies: A Dangerous History* (London: Reaktion Books, 2018); cf. also [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fairy#In\\_visual\\_art](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fairy#In_visual_art); see also <https://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/fairy> (both last accessed on Feb. 18, 2020).

**461** This myth has already been discussed from many different perspectives. See, for instance, Jessica Amanda Salmonson, *The Encyclopedia of Amazons: Women Warriors from Antiquity to the Modern Era* (New York: Paragon House, 1991); cf. the contributions to *Amazonen zwischen Griechen und Skythen: Gegenbilder in Mythos und Geschichte*, ed. Charlotte Schubert and Alexander Weiß. Beiträge zur Altertumskunde (Berlin and Boston: Walter de Gruyter, 2013); Robert Sturm, *Amazonen: Schriftquellen und moderne Forschung zum Mythos des kriegerischen Frauenvolkes* (Berlin: wvb, Wissenschaftlicher Verlag, 2016); John Man, *Searching for the Amazons: The Real Warrior Women of the Ancient World* (New York: Pegasus Books, 2018). See also Cécile Voisset-Veyseyre, *Des Amazones et des femmes* (Paris: Harmattan, 2010); Albrecht Classen, "The Amazons," *The International Encyclopedia of Human Sexuality*, ed. Patricia Whelehan and Anne Bolin (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2015), 67–69; online at: <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/9781118896877.wbiehs022/full> (last accessed on Feb. 18, 2020).

Alfonso X of Castile, for instance, intensively engaged with the Amazons in great detail, obviously because they belonged to the stock-in-trade of literary imagination everywhere. Naturally, they also figure in the *Libro d'Alixandre* (1170–1250), still very much in conformity with the classical model. By the late Middle Ages, however, probably under the influence of Italian literature (Boccaccio) on Spanish romances and novels, the Amazons were increasingly sentimentalized and incorporated into the traditional gender model playing more affectionate roles, such as in Juan Rodríguez del Padrón's *Triunfo de las donas* (1443), Diego de Valera's *Defensa de virtuosas mugeres* (ca. 1440), and Diego de San Pedro's *Cárcel de amor* (1492).

With the discovery of the New World, the ancient myth migrated there as well, as is reflected in Garci Rodríguez de Montalbo's *Amadis of Gaul* (1508) and his *Las Sergas de Esplandián* (1510). Although these Amazon women fight the invading men, they ultimately are pacified and integrated into the new community, entering marriages with the conquistadores, such as in Pedro de Luján's *Silves de la Selva* (1546). While previous imagination had strongly monstrified them, as we might say, their import to the Americas in literary terms mollified all those fears and comforted especially the male audience at least during the first years of conquest. With the rise of rationalism, however, they disappeared there as well from the popular imagination, yet not without leaving a deep impact at least on the local toponymy. The Amazons thus operated in a rather similar fashion as mermaids, nixes, water nymphs, and Melusine figures, adamantly opposed to men's authority within their own realm, and yet playing somehow with the notion of free love outside of the limits of traditional marriage.<sup>462</sup>

Surprisingly, perhaps, humans across the globe have always shared certain archetypes and images, icons and symbols, and this throughout the ages. Probing notions of imagination and fantasy thus can contribute to the further development of the Global Middle Ages, as difficult as this notion proves to be pursuing it in serious scholarly fashion. We do not always need to look for direct contacts, translations, exchanges, copies, or collaboration when we examine, for instance, shared experiences and concepts about the self and the world. Fear of the 'other,' the monster, or simply the foreign can be found throughout the ages and in virtually all cultures.<sup>463</sup> Hence, there are good reasons to search for

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<sup>462</sup> See also the contribution to this volume by Martha Moffitt Peacock dealing with the early modern Dutch myth of the Mermaid of Edam.

<sup>463</sup> See the contributions to *Meeting the Foreign* (see note 197). We could easily expand on this observation and also draw lines of connections to the modern world in which science fiction literature, videos, and games have amply profited from the medieval traditions. See

connections between western and eastern travelogues, which Sally Abed endeavors in her contribution by comparing John Mandeville's *Travels* (late thirteenth century) with the Andalusian Abu Hamid al-Gharnati's *Tuhfat al-Albāb* (twelfth century), uncovering meaningful parallels in these two famous and highly influential accounts about travel throughout vast stretches of land to the east. In the European tradition, the reports about wonder tend to precede the actual travel narratives, whereas the opposite is the case in the Arab tradition. Moreover, wonders or monsters are usually placed on the margins in Western texts and maps, which is not so much the case in eastern examples, and yet they mattered critically for both cultures. The distant location of wonders explains, she argues, the lack of interaction between monsters and the individual in Western accounts and, by contrast, the obvious interaction between both in Arab accounts.

There is no doubt about the fanciful nature of Mandeville's monsters, whereas his Arab counterpart, al-Gharnati, was much more concerned with offering a realistic description of those wondrous phenomena he witnessed on his journey, and yet both authors equally exerted a considerable influence on their contemporaries and posterity, and this despite both later being rejected as mere fabulists. Irrespective of different travel routes pursued by both writers, they shared similar fears of the mysterious Amazons, Gog and Magog, monsters as already described in Greek and Roman antiquity, headless races, giants, giant birds and ants. Both authors shared same sources, but both deviated from each other in the use of that common narrative material.

Al-Gharnati also included wondrous creatures such as the jinnis and brainless people, the Nasnas, of whom Mandeville knew nothing. Apparently, and we can generalize this, both drew intensively from imagination and fantasy and projected highly popular accounts of the strange and fanciful far away from home. Mandeville demonstrated greatest interest in monstrous races, whereas al-Gharnati favored to include comments about exotic architecture. Another significant difference consists of the former's emphasis on ugliness

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the contributions to *Fantastische Monster: Bilderwelten zwischen Grauen und Komik*, ed. Peggy Große, G. Ulrich Großmann, and Johannes Pommeranz (Nuremberg: Germanisches Nationalmuseum, 2015). Cf. also Sherry C. M. Lindquist and Asa Smon Mittman, *Medieval Monsters* (294). Contemporary movies about the encounters with aliens are obviously predicated on the same anthropological and imagological principles; see the recent movie *Arrival* (2016), directed by Denis Villeneuve and written by Eric Heisserer, and based on the 1998 short story "Story of Your Life" by Ted Chiang; cf. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arrival\\_\(film\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arrival_(film)) (last accessed on Feb. 18, 2020).

and cannibalism on the part of the monsters, while the latter highlighted brainlessness and the physical size of the foreign races.

Nevertheless, as Abed correctly underscores, here we face universal parallels in that these travel authors predicated their literary success on the inclusion of fanciful, imaginary creatures somewhere far away from the familiar world. Imagination exerted a great influence on both, even though both sometimes also drew, especially in Western traditions, from classical sources (Pliny the Elder), each time creating excitement, fear, pleasure, and puzzlement about the strangeness of the countries yonder one's own pale. Geography and monstrosity thus went hand in hand, both in the west and in the east, because the mechanisms of imagination obviously operated similarly throughout the entire age.

Long before modern psychoanalysts such as Sigmund Freud and C. G. Jung discovered the phenomenon of dreams as critical keys to unlock the world of human unconsciousness, ancient and medieval poets and philosophers, but also artists and theologians had already dealt with dreams as important tools to uncover hidden dimensions in the human mind, to understand divine messages, and to decode the prophecies contained in them. In her contribution, Christa Agnes Tuczay revisits the vast world of dreams in medieval (German) literature, discussing the often rather contradictory approaches pursued by the various poets, who have some of their protagonists accept dreams as truth-telling, while others reject them as nothing but illusions, and yet then have to suffer severe, deadly consequences.<sup>464</sup>

The phenomenon of dreams is intimately tied to imagination and fantasy, but many scholars in the Middle Ages recognized dreams as a profound issue that deserved full treatment in so-called *dream books*. In contrast to the modern world, interpreting dreams did not aim at analyzing the dreamer's personality or subconsciousness, but at comprehending the divine message contained in the dream. The dream expert had to understand, first, what kind of dream it was, before s/he could proceed with the effort to unravel the prophecy contained in it. Many times an individual must receive a dream multiple times before s/he accepts its serious nature and God's effort to communicate with him/

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<sup>464</sup> Similar prophetic dreams can be found all over the world, and so in medieval Japan, such as in the Oguri ballad, *Oguri Hangan* (ca. fifteenth century, fully developed only in the seventeenth century), contained in the *Kamakura ôzôshi*; cf. Yoshiki Koda, "Durch ehrlose Ehe dem Untergang geweiht – Eine mythologemisch Analyse des *Iwein* Hartmanns von Aue und der altjapanischen Predigballade *Oguri Hangan*," *Japanisch-deutsche Gespräche über Fremdheit im Mittelalter*, ed. Manshu Ide and Albrecht Classen. Stauffenburg Mediävistik, 2 (Tübingen: Stauffenburg Verlag, 2018), 199–214; here 203.

her. Dreams could contain warnings or promises, they could convey messages by God about future glory or dire projections of what the outcome of certain events would entail. Even though some dreamers in heroic epics and courtly romances dismiss their dreams, more often than not they seek out professional dream analysts who thus can help them to make the right decision. Some dreams are announcement dreams, whereas others are induced by male magicians and especially female sorceresses to cause confusion and deception. As Tuczay notes, in the Middle Ages more women than not were identified as particularly qualified and empowered to interpret dreams.

In her detailed discussions of many examples of dreams particularly in medieval courtly romances and heroic epics, Tuczay discovers altogether a high level of consistency in the dream discourse which contains a spiritual epistemology connecting the individual with the future, with God, and with imminent dangers. The appearance of wild animals threatening the dreamer proves to be particularly common, and many times the content of the dream is related to biblical motifs. Undoubtedly, Freud and Jung later approached dreams quite differently than their medieval predecessors, but we can be certain that throughout times, from antiquity to the present, the world of dreams has mattered deeply as a central phenomenon, at least within religion and literature.<sup>465</sup> Yet, the question of how we would have to interpret dreams today constitutes quite a different matter, although we all continue to have those nightly experiences, often quite chaotic and absurd.

As unique and culturally specific the various forms of imagination prove to be, it would be rather erroneous to assume that we moderns would not be able to understand any of the material realities underlying those medieval fantasies, as Jacques Le Goff, above all, has argued rather curiously, bluntly resisting the idea that human beings have shared certain features throughout times. Scott L. Taylor strongly suggests that there are many analytic ways into the minds of our medieval forebearers, as numerous scholars working on the history of

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<sup>465</sup> See also the brief but concise overview by Bernhard Dietrich Haage and Wolfgang Wegner, *Deutsche Fachliteratur der Artes in Mittelalter und Früher Neuzeit*. Grundlagen der Germanistik, 43 (Berlin: Erich Schmidt Verlag, 2007), 293; cf. also Jan Wehrle, "Dreams and Dream Theory," *Handbook of Medieval Culture: Fundamental Aspects and Conditions of the European Middle Ages*, ed. Albrecht Classen. Vol. 1 (Berlin and Boston: Walter de Gruyter, 2015), 329–46, who focuses above all on dreams as viewed by scholastic thinkers and theologians and includes comments on pan-European literature containing dreams. For philosophical approaches in antiquity and early medieval Arabic philosophy focused on those issues, see the contribution to this volume by David Bennett and Filip Radovic.

mentality and the history of emotions have amply demonstrated. All human beings are determined by imagination and fantasy, and we can probe those issues even today by applying critical tools of interpretation, as I have also argued throughout this entire ‘Introduction.’

Taylor examines how medieval writers perceived congenital abnormalities as *mirabilia* (natural wonders), whether they were purely fictional (as also discussed here by Filip Hrbek) or intuitive reflections of realistic, albeit monstrous, features. Much of medieval imagination derives directly from antiquity when these two features, imagination and fantasy, were already discussed at length. Throughout history, animals and people have been born with bodily disfigurement, which represented a huge epistemological challenge for theologians who tried to understand all life in light of God’s creation. Consequently, many writers reflected on the nature of hybridity, bestiality, and other forms of transgression or deviation from the norm in human life as teratogenetic. As many authors opined, women’s impressions were also frequently to be identified as a core reason for particular monstrous births (see also the contribution by Christa Agnes Tuczay). These and similar explanations continued to be of great relevance even up to and throughout the age of Enlightenment; otherwise contemporary monster lore and the delight in monster movies etc. would not have had such fertile ground to grow so well as they certainly have and continue to do. Teratology often became more sophisticated, systematic, and empirical, but it continued to be as imaginary as ever before, obviously because of the enormous fascination with the birth of supposed hybrid beings (see Gerald of Wales, for instance).

Taylor undergirds his approach by way of relying on the concept developed by the blind-deaf Russian psychologist, Alexander V. Suvorov, according to whom imagination is a process of projecting the self upon the world and recreating from a fragmentary, incomprehensible existence a coherent holistic perspective. This theoretical concept promises to offer useful analytic tools for the entire project here underway, and sheds especially meaningful light on the phenomenon of monstrous births and other disfigurements, such as in the case of Melusine’s sons (Jean d’Arras, Couldrette, Thüring von Ringoltingen, etc.; see above, and Classen’s own contribution to this volume). Both scientific and religious explanations served the various writers on abnormal births to develop explanations, which reflected deeply held opinions, whether based on imagination and fantasy or not.

On February 4, 2020, the regional appeals court of Naumburg (Oberlandesgericht Naumburg, Saxony-Anhalt, Germany) decided a case in which a private citizen, Michael Dietrich Düllmann, had sued that a sculpture on the outside wall of the parish church of Wittenberg depicting the notorious “Judensau” be removed because it constituted a form of anti-Semitism. The court agreed with

Düllmann that this historical sculpture from ca. 1250 was determined by hatred against Jews and represented pure insult and contempt, but since it is today accompanied by an informational plaque explaining the historical context, the entire ensemble now constitutes, as the judge determined, a memorial site.<sup>466</sup>

The critical question continues to be whether we can today simply eliminate or overcome the past horrors, crimes, hatred, and evil deeds committed by our predecessors removing the documents carved in stone, written on parchment, or expressed visually or even musically as if nothing had happened? But Holocaust museums and memorials, such as the one in Berlin, serve an extremely important function to keep the memory of the dark sides of our history alive so we do not fall back into this form of barbarism. Anti-Judaism, later transformed into an even more aggressive anti-Semitism, has been a bane of humankind since antiquity, and it exerted its huge influence on medieval imagination and fantasy as well, as Birgit Wiedl outlines in her contribution.<sup>467</sup>

Throughout times, outsiders, foreigners, members of minority groups have regularly been denigrated as threats to the well-being of the insider group. Jews have particularly suffered from this imaginary projection, as the charges of blood libel and host desecration have demonstrated vividly, especially since the thirteenth century. Christians always attacked them because they were the presumed killers of Jesus Christ, which led to many kinds of imagination about the Jews' presumed nefarious intentions while living within western Europe, making huge profits from usury, which was forbidden to all Christians, at least until the late Middle Ages.

Wiedl emphasizes, however, that Christian writers or artists were not necessarily concerned with the Jews as such; instead they depicted them in such absurdly negative terms in order to consolidate the Christian faith of the ordinary

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**466** This was extensively reported about in German news outlets, especially because the case represents a highly sensitive issue, for all sides involved, for historical and contemporary reasons pertaining to communal identity, inclusion and exclusion, majority and minority, violence versus tolerance, and the question how we come to terms with memory, accepting our historical roots without becoming their victims; see, for instance, Peter Maxill, <https://www.spiegel.de/panorama/justiz/judensau-in-wittenberg-michael-duellmann-bekaempft-den-antisemitismus-a-9f786518-3977-4c59-9d30-823c8ae6ef20>. For an excellent critical comment by Matthias Drobinski supporting the judge's decision, see <https://www.sueddeutsche.de/politik/wittenberg-judensau-urteil-kommentar-1.4783930> (both last accessed on Feb. 4, 2020).

**467** Birgit Wiedl, "Laughing at the Beast: The Judensau. Anti-Jewish Propaganda and Humor from the Middle Ages to the Early Modern Period," *Laughter in the Middle Ages and Early Modern Times. Epistemology of a Fundamental Human Behavior, its Meaning, and Consequences*, ed. Albrecht Classen. Fundamentals of Medieval and Early Modern Culture, 5 (Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2010), 325–64.

parishioners by way of providing them with a stark contrast foil – certainly an ideological strategy still at work today in many quarters of our world, as perhaps best expressed in the startling pair of two allegorical female figures, *Ecclesia* (Christianity) and *Synagoga* (Judaism) widely present throughout medieval Europe. The ‘othering’ strategy demarcating the Jews as outsiders or members of a religious minority also extending to laws forcing Jews to wear specific markers (the yellow badge) singling them out from society at large.

Christians’ imagination also pertained to Jews’ allegedly distinct physical features, as many different artists reflected in their works tinged in strong anti-Judaic sentiments. Feared animals such as the hyena, the snake, and also the owl, were commonly associated with Jews, and we might actually wonder how Jewish communities survived in the Middle Ages in face of such a barrage of hostile propaganda directed against them, mirroring a deeply troubled Christian imagination about their fellow religionists. The late Middle Ages witnessed a tremendous increase of this anti-Judaism because of the new media technology, the printing press, and a growing interest in public performances of Shrovetide plays and other texts, where Jews could be publicly mocked and ridiculed, which all fed conveniently to perverse Christian fantasies about their own ordinary neighbors. As tragic as it might be, the Christian faith was grounded not only in love, but also in hatred, as the sculptures of the *Synagoga* and of the “Judensau” drastically call it out until today.<sup>468</sup>

The human mind depends heavily on its capacity to imagine alternative worlds, to develop ideas, and to conceive of abstract ideas by the use of metaphors, allegories, or symbols. In the Middle Ages, the genre of the bestiary was of great significance, primarily beginning with the famous anonymous *Physiologus* (ca. 2nd–4th century C.E.), because reflecting on beasts, birds, reptiles, and other living creatures not belonging to the human race facilitated profoundly the exploration of the spiritual dimension of all material existence. While fables mirrored human vices and virtues, moral shortcomings, failures, and also ideal behavior, the animals discussed in bestiaries served a critical epistemological function for the allegorical interpretation of this world moving the spectator and reader from his/her physical dimension to a transcendent one.

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**468** In a surprising parallel, Alan Posener, “Das Mahnmal der Schande muss bleiben,” *Die Welt*, Feb. 5, 2020, argues in favor of keeping those shameful sculptures in public view because we should not simply whitewash the Christian religion and western Christian politics; online at: <https://www.welt.de/debatte/kommentare/article205616149/Judensau-Relief-Das-Mahnmal-der-Schande-muss-bleiben.html> (last accessed on Feb. 18, 2020).



Jane Beal, in her contribution to this volume, begins with a perfect example for this kind of reading the *Book of Nature*, as Ernst Robert Curtius had already coined it in his seminal study *European Literature in the Latin Middle Ages* (1948). This noteworthy scene is contained in Dante's *Purgatorio*, in the pilgrim's encounter with the highly symbolic griffin; thereupon she traces the major aspects of bestiaries throughout the Middle Ages by focusing on four creatures that made possible the religious meditation on Christ and the human soul's relationship to the divinity.<sup>469</sup>

This imaginary labor, so to speak, served as a mental tool to turn toward God, to visualize events in the life of Christ, and to understand the deeper meaning of the physical world in theological terms, moving from the historical (or tropological), to the allegorical, and then to the anagogical level of epistemology. Imagination thus gained a critically important function in transcending the physical limitations of the material existence and in opening mental gateways toward the divine.

Beal relies primarily on the wonderfully illuminated twelfth-century English *Aberdeen Bestiary*,<sup>470</sup> wherein the viewer and reader was persuasively invited to delve deeply into the images and the accompanying words in order to discover God by means of the physical book. The reader was thus ultimately invited to achieve a *lectio divina*, a reading inspired by God, making it possible for the human soul to progress toward and perceive the spiritual realm while still here on earth. As much as pre-modern society was deeply determined by profound fear of the infernal afterlife,<sup>471</sup> for instance, as much it was also sustained by major trust in the divine grace and in the ability of the human mind to grow toward God through meditation, prayer, critical thinking, introspection, imagination, confession, purification, and metaphysical reflections.

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**469** See also L. A. J. R. Hoowen, "Bestiarien," *Dämonen, Monster, Fabelwesen*, ed. Ulrich Müller and Werner Wunderlich, *Mittelalter Mythen*, 1 (St. Gall: UVK Fachverlag für Wissenschaft und Studium, 1999), 59–75.

**470** Debra Higgs Strickland, *Medieval Bestiaries: Text, Image, Ideology*. RES Monographs in Anthropology and Aesthetics (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995); Ron Baxter, *Bestiaries and Their Users in the Middle Ages* (Stroud: Sutton Pub.; London: Courtauld Institute, 1998); for the completely digitized version of the *Aberdeen Bestiary*, see <https://www.abdn.ac.uk/bestiary/ms24/f2r>. For a complete table of contents, see [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aberdeen\\_Bestiary](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aberdeen_Bestiary); for detailed discussions, see David Badke, "The Medieval Bestiary: Manuscript: Univ. Lib. MS 24 (Aberdeen Bestiary)," online at: <http://bestiary.ca/manuscripts/manu100.htm> (all last accessed on Feb. 18, 2020).

**471** Peter Dinzelbacher, "Ein Gott der Rache ist der Herr" (see note 409). In the case of Hieronymus Bosch's panels depicting the horrors of the Inferno, however, we might wonder to what extent the artist really and absolutely intended to convey or instill fear. There is an extreme degree of artistic imagination and creativity, and there is so much to discover in the background and the margins that the spectator might forget about the primary purposes of those paintings, and might simply delight in the fanciful and fantastic details.

One of the most lasting and impactful representatives of medieval imagination was the monster, a rather amorphous and shape-shifting figure on the map of pre-modern mentality. In his contribution to this volume, Siegfried Christoph takes us through an extensive discussion of the meaning of monsters as they emerged in late medieval literature, carefully distinguishing between the grotesque, the degenerate, the marvelous, and the monstrous itself. While the first two categories rely critically on their difference to a norm or some kind of reality, the latter two represent imagination, either individual or collective. This becomes particularly noticeable in the Arthurian romance *Gauriel von Muntabel* by Konrad von Stoffeln (late thirteenth century) where the poet draws on all them but increasingly transforms them into non-threatening beings, simply residing at the margin of human society. Those in the first category are not monsters like Grendel in the Anglo-Saxon *Beowulf* or the many monstrous peoples in the anonymous *Herzog Ernst* (ms. B, ca. 1220). Instead, those monstrous figures serve to entertain the audience, to draw from the collective memory, and to build on the collectively shared imagination.

As Christoph points out, most readers/listeners would have easily recognized them since Konrad drew from a treasure house of well-established fantasy figures and spaces, although he constantly makes efforts to authenticate them by means of emphasizing that he allegedly read about them in a Spanish source, which was, at least for his German audience, far enough away to prevent any verification and also served, probably because of the major role of Toledo as a center of Arabic, Hebrew, and Christian learning, as a mythical place of secret knowledge.

While previous scholars have mostly blamed the poet for his lack of novelty, what matters for us is that in *Gauriel* the monster itself has transitioned into a familiar and hardly threatening being that plays an important role on the Arthurian stage. Konrad's contribution thus does not consist really of any creative strategies, but of his efforts in compiling much literary material from previous sources and mixing them in an interesting fashion that appealed to the collective imagination and memory. His intention was not to excite the audience through fanciful innovation, but to keep the audience's attention through the evocation and reactivation of a storehouse of familiar images, some of which do not belong to the usual category of monsters, but are rather fanciful characters, being more marvelous or degenerate than monstrous.<sup>472</sup>

It seems most appropriate to identify Konrad's narrative strategy as an operation to re-introduce stock figures, to couple them with magical and imaginary

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<sup>472</sup> For a treatment of mermaids, fairies, and the like, see Albrecht Classen's contribution to this volume. For the famous Dutch Mermaid of Edam, see the contribution to this volume by Martha Moffitt Peacock.

beings, and thus to create a comfortable, somewhat exciting, but not truly challenging or dreadful literary tableau. Given that medieval literary aesthetics placed fairly little emphasis on originality and praised, instead, primarily the ability to draw from sources and to reactivate past, often classical models and images, it behooves us to reassess this voluminous Arthurian romance, *Gauriel von Muntabel*, once again, especially because it provided so much material for the audience's renewed and re-animated imagination. Modern neuroscience, as Christoph alerts us, has also confirmed that human imagination apparently works primarily by drawing from much learned or practical experience.<sup>473</sup> We are, thus, in the good position of recognizing a universal phenomenon, imagination, that functions quite similarly throughout time and creates aesthetic effects even when originality is lacking.

Not by accident, related literary material outside of the German-speaking world, such as fourteenth-century Czech narratives, easily confirm this impression insofar as the various poets freely operate, as Filip Hrbek demonstrates in his contribution, with fantasy elements and delight their audiences with references to highly imaginary features, objects, and beings. The new urban audiences in Czech lands obviously much enjoyed listening to or reading about adventurous stories as they had already developed in the western parts of Europe and which were based on the notion of fictionality.<sup>474</sup> In that process, the literary discourse divided increasingly into a more historical and a more imaginary setting, which was also the case in late medieval Bohemia.

As much as many of the Czech-language narratives were more or less translations from Middle High German texts, a close reading easily demonstrates, as is commonly the case in medieval translations, a considerable diversion from the original sources, especially characterized by a more intensive utilization of fanciful elements. Hrbek examines here the following four narratives: *Duke Ernst* (*Vévoda Arnošt*); *Dietrich von Bern* (*Jetřich Berúnký*); *Tandrias and Floribell* (*Tandariáš a Floribella*); and *The Chronicle of Bruncvik* (*Kronika o Bruncvikovi*). Each one of them is filled with magic, mysterious objects, legendary swords and horses, monsters, and other uncanny creatures.

Obviously, just as today, late medieval Czech audiences enjoyed being entertained by poems determined by miracles, wonders, magic, and other

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**473** For further references to recent discoveries in neuroscience regarding the operation of imagination, see note 481 below.

**474** See the contributions to *Historische Narratologie: Mediävistische Perspektiven*, ed. Harald Haferland and Matthias Meyer. Trends in Medieval Philology, 19 (Berlin and Boston: Walter de Gruyter, 2010); and to *Fiktion und Fiktionalität in den Literaturen des Mittelalters* (see note 322).

incomprehensible phenomena, maybe because they desired to be elevated out of their mundane urban existence and to be charmed by those fantastic accounts. Those texts were not fairy tales, but they probably shared many features of this genre insofar as the poets relied heavily on fictional license – a universal need both then and today, both in western and in eastern Europe. Little wonder that the fanciful account by John Mandeville was also translated into Czech and contributed to the further development of those entertaining narratives. Surprisingly, however, as Hrbek also notices, despite the great interest in the imaginative dimension, none of those texts contain references to magicians or witches, maybe out of deference to the Catholic Church. If we want to understand fourteenth-century Czech collective imagination, hence mentality, and the world of emotions, the analysis of those entertaining texts proves to be highly effective and insightful.

We can also be assured that figures of fantasy and imagination, such as wild men and women, giants, dwarfs, even Amazons or wild beasts could assume significant political, ideological functions, such as in heraldry.<sup>475</sup> Mermaids, even though today they are normally thought to be situated only in the world of children, could also exert a tremendous appeal to the general public under specific circumstances.<sup>476</sup> In fact, their origin can be traced back to antiquity and biblical times, often identified as agents of doom, or elusive love.<sup>477</sup> Martha Moffitt Peacock investigates here the legend of the famous Mermaid of Edam, Netherlands, who in 1403, because of some unfortunate circumstances following a storm, the breaking of dams, and their subsequent restoration, was trapped in the water, then invited into human society, and was soon able to adapt to the local customs, learning how to spin and to practice the Christian faith.

As Moffitt Peacock points out in her study, the people of Haarlem, clearly aware about the publicity stunt which they could achieve with this

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<sup>475</sup> See, for instance, Stephanie Leitch, *Mapping Ethnography in Early Modern Germany: New Worlds in Print Culture* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), ch. 3, 37–62.

<sup>476</sup> Tara E. Pedersen, *Mermaids and the Production of Knowledge in Early Modern England* (Farnham, Surrey, and Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2015); Juliette Wood, *Fantastic Creatures in Mythology and Folklore: From Medieval Times to the Present Day* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2019). Cf. also Malcolm South, *Mythical and Fabulous Creatures: A Source Book and Research Guide* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1987).

<sup>477</sup> Beate Otto, *Unterwasser-Literatur: von Wasserfrauen und Wassermännern*. Epistemata. Reihe Literaturwissenschaft, 348 (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2001); Andreas Kraß, *Meerjungfrauen: Geschichten einer unmöglichen Liebe*. S. Fischer Wissenschaft (Frankfurt a. M.: S. Fischer, 2010); Antje Syfuß, *Nixenliebe: Wasserfrauen in der Literatur* (Frankfurt a. M.: Haag + Herchen, 2006).

quasi-monstrous and fanciful creature, convinced the citizens of Edam to bring the Mermaid over to them, where she gained great fame and received, after her death, a Christian burial. This mythical story continued to experience tremendous popularity throughout the following centuries all over the Netherlands, especially because she soon transformed into an iconic, virtually ubiquitous figure representing Dutch identity and subsequently also the Dutch struggle for independence from the Spanish crown in many different artistic media, including tiles, coats of arms, and even maps, where the Mermaid represents maritime Dutch prowess, patriotism, and the triumph over the external foes.

Moffitt Peacock also points out that the Mermaid is commonly depicted as spinning, which became a major textile work involving mostly women, who apparently thus contributed in a major way to the Dutch textile industry. As is so often the case with iconic images, representing and mirroring fantasy and imagination, the Mermaid of Edam thus could serve multiple purposes, as her widespread representation in Dutch artworks from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries indicates. She was not a monster, but she certainly belonged to the other, marginal, or nether world, very similar to the Melusine figure highly popular in late medieval literature and art (see above), or the famous Lorelei in or next to the river Rhine, until today the most famous mythical figure in German folklore and fantasy.<sup>478</sup> Facts and fiction smoothly merged in her case, and ultimately no one cared about the mythical origin of this creature because she had achieved such a high-ranking status in early modern Dutch political discourse. The myth of the mermaid has of course continued throughout the ages and exerts a significant influence on public culture even today, as best illustrated by the famous bronze mermaid sculpture (“Den lille Havfrue”) in the harbor of Copenhagen, created by Edvard Eriksen in 1913 based on a fairy tale by Hans Christian Andersen (1836), which has become a major tourist attraction but also a regular object of politically and otherwise motivated vandalism over the years.<sup>479</sup>

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**478** See the contributions to *Monsters and Borders in the Early Modern Imagination*, ed. Jana Byars and Hans Peter Broedel (see note 448), and especially Broedel’s article in this volume, “The Mermaid of Edam Meets Medical Science: Empiricism and the Marvelous in Seventeenth-Century Zoological Thought” (35–50). For the history of the Loreley figure, see Helga Arend, “Die Loreley – Entwicklung einer literarischen Gestalt zu einem internationalen Mythos,” *Gender und Interkulturalität: Ausgewählte Beiträge der 3. Fachtagung Frauen-/Gender-Forschung in Rheinland-Pfalz*, ed. Liesel Hermes, Andrea Hirschen, and Iris Meißner. Frauen- und Gender-Forschung in Rheinland-Pfalz, 4 (Tübingen: Stauffenburg-Verlag, 2002), 19–28.

**479** Olav Harsløf, with photos from Mads Folmer, *Den lille havfrue: en biografi* (Copenhagen: Gyldendal, 2016). For a good list of events affecting the sculpture, of replicas, and for the

German Baroque drama was not only determined by allegories, as Walter Benjamin had famously claimed, but also by symbols, both interacting with each other intimately, as John Pizer notes in his contribution to this volume. Moving beyond the traditional differentiation between these two rhetorical tools, Pizer observes that Gryphius develops his stage plays with the help of different strategies, many of which are predicated on imagination and fantasy, aiming at convincing his audience of the truth and reality of what is presented there in spiritual terms. After all, poets' and artists' ideas, for instance, aim at their own realization into texts, or actions, meaning that we can read Gryphius's plays, like all plays – see the two mottos by Shakespeare at the beginning of this essay – as mirrors of the creative mind.

This, however, also evokes the question whether we as human beings pursue our own lives, or whether we are the result of someone's imagination (God's?) that catapults us onto the stage of existence in material terms. In Benjaminian terms, are we allegories or symbols, or both together at the same time? Undoubtedly, there are important differences between allegory and symbol, but despite Benjamin's strong claims regarding German Baroque mourning plays, it makes more sense, as Pizer suggests, to recognize in both significant elements that mirror the human mind as it evolves in front of our eyes through the behavior of the individual characters on the stage.

Even though Gryphius relied heavily on chronicle accounts, his tragedies heavily utilized fantastic elements through which he achieved his goal to present his ethical concerns. Prophecy emerges as a valid interpretive tool, which means that the individual is invited to rely on his/her own fantasy to a considerable extent because there are portents to be discovered that provide relevant information about the future determined, of course, by God's providence.

In fact, in contradistinction to Benjamin's reading of Gryphius specifically and Baroque mourning plays generally, the distinction between the symbolic and allegorical does not help much, whereas the strong emphasis on the imaginary and fanciful forces presented on the stage matters much more centrally and allows us to grasp more in depth how Gryphius conceived of history and utilized it for his political-ethical discourse underlying his providential concept of human destiny embraced by a strong Christian faith. In this regard, we can actually observe significant parallels between the plays by Shakespeare and Gryphius, both of whom operated heavily with fanciful forces such as ghosts, furies, and deceased souls. In other words, the Baroque play was (especially by

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historical background, see [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The\\_Little\\_Mermaid](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Little_Mermaid) (last accessed on Feb. 18, 2020).

Gryphius and the somewhat younger Daniel Casper von Lohenstein) heavily predicated on imagination and the employment of fanciful elements (omens, inaugurations, prophecies) to bring to life on the stage religious and philosophical ideals and values.

In the Ambrose Bierce short story, “An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge” (1890), the protagonist experiences a stream of consciousness just moments before being hanged off a bridge during the American Civil War. Instead of suffering death, the rope rips, and the near-victim can rescue himself. But just when he believes that he has survived his torments, waking up at the gate to his plantation, and just before he is about to hug his wife, he suddenly returns to reality and is then actually hanged, so the major part of the story represents his imagination, with a whole day and night of events compressed into seconds before his execution. This literary motif was already developed long before Bierce in China during the Tang dynasty, by Li Gongzuo (ca. 778–848) in his *The Governor of Nanke*. The medieval Japanese folktale *The Dream of Akinosuke* appears to be based on that motif as well, which was similarly developed in medieval Spain when Don Juan Manuel published his *El Conde Lucanor* (ca. 1335), especially Chapter XII, “Of that which happened to a Dean of Santiago, with Don Illan, the Magician, who lived at Toledo.” Charles Dickens’ essay “A Visit to Newgate” picked up the same motif, and its reception history extends to the twentieth century as well, with H. G. Wells’s “The Door in the Wall” (1906) and “The Beautiful Suit” (1909), Leo Perutz’s *From Nine to Nine* (1918), Vladimir Nabokov’s “Details of a Sunset” (1924) and “The Aurelian” (1930), Jorge Luis Borges’s “The Secret Miracle” (1944) and “The South” (1949), William Golding’s *Pincher Martin* (1956), Terry Gilliam’s *Brazil* (1985) as well as Julio Cortázar’s “The Island at Midday” (ca. 1951).<sup>480</sup>

As much as all this makes us think of modern-day surrealism as a major trend in contemporary, especially Latin-American literature, some of the major titles take us also back to the Middle Ages and particularly the Baroque era. Emmy Herland presents in her contribution the astounding case of a ghost who does not seem to be a ghost and yet operates as such, and all this virtually simultaneously on the same level as in the modern literary examples where a vision or a surreal situation determines the protagonist’s awareness.

In Lope de Vega’s play *El caballero de Olmedo* from ca. 1620/1623, the ghost seems to be a shadow of Don Alonso, and yet also appears to be his alter-ego,

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**480** For further examples of the long-term reception history of Bierce’s story until today, see [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/An\\_Occurrence\\_at\\_Owl\\_Creek\\_Bridge](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/An_Occurrence_at_Owl_Creek_Bridge) (last accessed on Feb. 18, 2020).

predicting his future, which is still not decided. Critics have argued for a long time whether the ghost would indicate that Don Alonso has already died, or whether it would represent his own imagination of a future possible death. What did Vega intend with this eerie figure, is it a shadow of Don Alfonso, is it his own future death, is it an internal or an external phenomenon?

The number of critical voices addressing this phenomenon reveals how difficult this issue proves to be, a true mark of literary genius, leaving the audience guessing, just as much as the protagonist whose imagination and fantasy seem to play tricks with him, whereas we are really dealing with a stream of consciousness, very similar to the modern examples of this motif. The ghost could have been sent by God, or by another spiritual power, but the evolution of the play prevents us from reaching that narrow conclusion. Vega's strategy with this shadowy figure remains ominous, ambiguous, and unstable, and we would make the best bet if we accepted the notion that it represents Alonso's inner self 'materialized' in this prophesying ghost.

Through this appearance, the hero's imagination and fantasy are intriguingly staged before our own eyes, and his free will apparently battles against inner or outside forces. The *sombra* does not give any clear message and only frightens Alonso into actions that he decides on himself, depending on his humoral conditions, being melancholic or phlegmatic at that moment. Vega thus projects the individual caught between his/her imagination and premonitions, and when it attempts to act rationally, strong outside forces determine the mind or subconsciousness.

For the audience, even today, the message contained in this play remains murky, at best, and this enigmatic perception indicates that the hero, that we as individuals, are drawn into various directions by our emotions, imaginations, and fantasies, all depending on the circumstances. Does Don Alonso simply dream about this ghost, or does he actually encounter one? The play leaves all those options open and invites the audience to reflect on the many possible angles closely associated with the world of the human mind. At any rate, Alonso dies in fact on his way to Olmedo, but many aspects remain uncertain and are open to interpretation. The playwright experimented, to be sure, with a most sophisticated stage operation that suggests many different strategies at play: dream, imagination, a true ghost, a divine message, or a projection of Don Alonso's humoral state. There is, in other words, much of modern-day surrealism already on the Spanish Baroque stage.

While many medieval writers simply dove into imagination and played with their fantasy, projecting those images as real onto their literary stage (romances, heroic epics, short verse narratives, etc.), seventeenth-century authors, such as Thomas Vaughan (1621–1666), more or less an apologist for the Rosicrucians originating in Germany, examined much more theoretically the



meaning of the other dimension of human mentality in the abstract aspects of their works. However, as Thomas Willard indicates in his contribution to this volume, when Vaughan resorted to the genres of dream vision and commentaries, he certainly continued with a strong medieval tradition, best represented by the highly popular *Roman de la rose* (thirteenth century). Nevertheless, as Willard also hastens to alert us, Vaughan discriminated carefully between imagination and fantasy, the latter being a kind of delusion of significant danger for the human soul. Following the medical teachings of Paracelsus, Vaughan was keenly aware that false concepts in the mind could lead to physical or spiritual sickness. At the same time, he also accepted a higher form of imagination, that is, the vision that connects the imagination of the created human being to the imagination of God in creating the world. Here he followed the mystical tradition of biblical interpretation from the high Middle Ages.

In his *Lumen de Lumine: Or a new Magicall Light discovered and Communicated to the World* (1651), Vaughan endeavored to build a whole theory of imagination from a religious point of view – after all, he was an ordained priest of the Church of England – and to apply it to the magic and alchemy on which he wrote in earlier books. He argued that people gain divine illumination through God's grace and that even magic would have to be seen in that light, as divine inspiration through the natural world. People's pathway through life aimed ultimately at the final brilliance of the entire creation, and the steps toward that epiphany could be guided by magic, alchemy, astrology, and cabala.

God's secrets would be there for all to see by means of human imagination if the mind would be open enough to accept the individual approaches to a spiritual epistemology. In other words, the greatness of God's creation (the macrocosm) can be recognized here in the individual (the microcosm) by means of human imagination. As Willard then elucidates, Vaughan turned to much Rosicrucian and Paracelsian thinking when he elaborated his concepts of imagination as a key to divine illumination, and he drew heavily from the alchemical discourse to explain his ideas. The mystical visions developed by Vaughan, with the light of nature illuminating the darkness, thus prove to be significant forerunners of much psychological research by C. G. Jung and others because his notion of imagination as a stepping stone toward the ultimate level of understanding of God's view of the creation (anagogically) proves to be of universal value, echoing much late medieval theology (especially mysticism; see my comments about Hildegard of Bingen above) and magical thought, while foreshadowing dream analysis in the twentieth century. In many ways, then, Vaughan can be identified as a major path breaker who brought Rosicrucian ideas to early modern England. To gain understanding, according to Vaughan, it was necessary first to wander into the world of fantasy and dreams and there to search for

guidance from above. In essence, every poet, composer, painter, or sculptor both then and today would agree with this observation because the material existence is only one aspect of the complete whole of life.

There is no existence without ideas, images, concepts, or dreams, and those need, of course, the factual dimension to translate into something concrete. Every scientific discovery, for instance, is mostly preceded by an idea, a concept, a vague notion, a flash of what could be possible, which subsequently is rendered into concrete reality. There is individual imagination and there is collective imagination, and both seem to work in tandem with each other. The cultural and material framework for this operation has certainly changed, but the actual findings by neuroscientists confirm that the processes in our brains have always functioned the same way.<sup>481</sup>

Unfortunately, politicians and publicists have also realized the enormous potentials of imagination that can so easily be utilized for evoking fears, creating stereotypes, and producing hence aggression and hostility. The medieval and early modern examples reflecting imagination and fantasy have thus much to tell us today. The imaginary continues to rest at or in the borderlands, as contemporary comments about the alleged need to build walls to keep out illegals, migrants, asylum seekers, or generally foreigners have amply demonstrated. Monsters keep living with us because they illustrate and incorporate our mental concepts.<sup>482</sup>

## Acknowledgments

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**481** *The Cambridge Handbook of the Neuroscience of Creativity*, ed. Rex E. Jung and Oshin Vartanian (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018); Jim Davies, *Imagination: The Science of Your Mind's Greatest Power* (New York: Pegasus Books, 2019); Jonathan Erickson, *Imagination in the Western Psyche: From Ancient Greece to Modern Neuroscience*. Research in Analytical Psychology and Jungian Studies Series (London and New York: Routledge, 2020). See also the contribution to this volume by Siegfried Christoph.

**482** See the useful theoretical and historical reflections by Hans Peter Broedel and Jana Byars, "Introduction," *Monsters and Borders in the Early Modern Imagination* (see note 448), 1–18.

of Humanities. I would like to express my gratitude to each academic entity for their generosity. My colleague and friend, Jean Godsall-Myers (Pennsylvania, Independent Scholar) was kind enough to take over the role of chair in two afternoon sessions, and later she graciously also commented on an early version of this long introduction. Each paper was thoroughly reviewed, revised, and resubmitted many times, so the entire group of scholars served more or less as peer commentators and critical readers. I myself took greatest pain (and pleasure) to edit each article as thoroughly as possible, maybe stretching my dear colleagues' patience a wee bit too much. But the principle was to achieve the highest possible scholarly level with the least amount of mistakes, typographical errors, and neglect of relevant research literature. Several colleagues were also so kind enough to provide me with feedback for this 'Introduction.'<sup>483</sup>

I was also very fortunate to have access to excellent research libraries during the summer of 2019 while spending time in Europe and elsewhere. Much of this 'Introduction' was written while I worked at the libraries of the universities of Bamberg, Halle, Frankfurt, Bochum, and at the *Rheinische Landesbibliothek* Koblenz (all Germany), and Salzburg (Austria). I would also like to acknowledge the very new library of the Nazarbayev University in Nur-Sultan, Kazakhstan, where I spent two weeks in July of 2019 and found quite a bit of very recent research literature that allowed me to bring some sections of the present study to the latest state of the art. The final touches to this 'Introduction' I could accomplish while working in the library of my own university in Tucson, and during a brief 'retreat' to our home in Hilo, Hawai'i, during the end of the year holidays. My thanks go out to all the various librarians who supported me in my research efforts. I would also like to express my gratitude to the wonderful editorial staff at Walter de Gruyter helping me to steer this book through the final stages preparing it for publication.

I am fully aware that some readers might criticize me for this book-length 'introduction,' but I believe that this is a necessary, comprehensive, in-depth investigation for such a voluminous tome and for such a fundamental topic, coupled with carefully developed analyses and summaries of the individual articles. In the following section, many different contributors will help us to probe the issues at stake much further underscoring how relevant they have always been both in East and West, and in all other cultures as well throughout time.

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<sup>483</sup> I would like to express my thanks particularly to several colleagues who read this essay in part or in whole and provided valuable corrections and feedback: first and foremost, Marilyn L. Sandidge, Westfield State University, MA, who was so kind enough to read the entire Introduction twice; then also Robert Wade Kenny, Mount Saint Vincent University, Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada; Fidel Fajardo-Acosta, Creighton University, Omaha, NE; Thomas Willard, University of Arizona; and also Jean Godsall-Myers, Pennsylvania (Independent Scholar).



David Bennett and Filip Radovic

# When Dreams Got Real: The Ontology of Dreaming in the Arabic Aristotelian Tradition

## The Problem with Dreams

Dreams are a special problem. Like many of our enlightened contemporaries, Aristotle acknowledged that dreams occur while denying that they could be considered “prophetic,” except insofar as they might coincidentally resemble a future event, serve as a diagnostic indication of some previously unnoticed ailment, or spur the dreamer to perform some trivial act upon waking (e.g., dreamt of pie; made a pie).<sup>1</sup> For Aristotle, the dream-image is a sensation delayed; it is stuck in the pipes of the sense organs until the relaxed perceiver is at his most vulnerable, asleep.<sup>2</sup> Recently, philosophers have been especially concerned with how or whether to characterize the dreaming state as genuine “experience,” and the discovery of REM-sleep has led to numerous scientific theories about the causes, mechanisms, and precise temporal characteristics of

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<sup>1</sup> Aristotle's account of dreams is found in two short treatises in the *Parva Naturalia*: *De Insomniis* and *De Divinatione per Somnum*. For an introduction to those texts (and the texts themselves), see David Gallop, *Aristotle on Sleep and Dreams: A Text and Translation with Introduction, Notes and Glossary* (Peterborough, Ont.: Broadview Press, 1990), and Philip J. van der Eijk's commentaries on the texts in *Aristoteles: De insomniis, De divinatione per somnum* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1994). As we will demonstrate in this paper, there is much more to say about Aristotle's views on the possibility of prophetic dreams: this complicates the “Aristotelian” influence on later ancient and medieval philosophy. For current scholarship on the Aristotelian texts and tradition, see *Forms of Representation in the Aristotelian Tradition*, ed. Christina Thomsen Thörnqvist and Juhana Toivanen. Vol. 2: *Dreaming* (Leiden: Brill, forthcoming), and Filip Radovic, “Aristotle on Prevision through Dreams,” *Ancient Philosophy* 36 (2016), 383–407.

<sup>2</sup> This explanation is presented in *De Insomniis* (see note 1), 3, 460b28–461b7.

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**David Bennett**

**Filip Radovic**, University of Gothenburg, Sweden

dreams.<sup>3</sup> Since the early modern period, the most famous philosophical issue concerning dreams has been so-called Cartesian dream skepticism, whereby – following Descartes – we wonder whether we can be certain that we are not, in fact, dreaming.<sup>4</sup>

Yet in ordinary conversation with our friends, we endeavor to express what we have “seen” in our dreaming state. We take these experiences to be meaningful enough to discuss, or as belonging to a special category of entertainment that is more meaningful than pure fiction. Thus, even when I make a nonsensical supposition (“suppose your mother is an elephant,” e.g.), it is quite different from relating the empirically true<sup>5</sup> statement, “I dreamt that your mother was an elephant.” However eerie or fantastic its setting, the topic of the dream is fraught with meaning for the dreamer and his audience. A professional psychiatrist need not subscribe to some theory of interpretation in order to obtain valuable information from the presentation of a subject’s dream story, and a friend (particularly one who turns up in the dream narrative) will also extract meaning when taken into confidence. The meaning conveyed is treasured as more intimate property than might be obtained from discussing an object of art common to both discussants.

This value, i.e., meaningfulness, sits uncomfortably with our sense of the fantastic nature of dreams, and the ease with which they are dismissed.<sup>6</sup> On the one

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3 For a comprehensive study of contemporary philosophical discussions about dreaming and the influence of scientific research, see Jennifer Windt, *Dreaming: A Conceptual Framework for Philosophy of Mind and Empirical Research* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2015).

4 Among other antecedents to Descartes’s dream skepticism is the skeptical argument found in al-Ghazālī, *Munqidh min al-ḍalāl*, ed. Jamil Saliba and Kāmil ‘Ayyād (Beirut: Dār al-Andalus, 1981), 66.16–67.5 (§§12–15 in Richard J. McCarthy’s translation; it is published with varying pagination, so we use the section numbers, which are constant). For ancient sources on dream skepticism, see Plato’s *Theaetetus* 157e–158e (*Theaetetus*, trans. Harold North Fowler. Loeb Classical Library [orig. 1921]; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006), and Sextus Empiricus’s *Adv. Math.* 402–404 (*Against Those in the Disciplines*, trans. Richard Bett, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), and *Outlines* 100–117 (Sextus Empiricus, *Outlines of Skepticism*, ed. and trans. Julia Annas and Jonathan Barnes [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000]).

5 Yet unverifiable: interestingly, in the Islamic prophetic traditions relating to dream interpretation, which contributed to the context of the material discussed in this paper, false testimony regarding one’s dreams is a major offense. See *al-Ṣaḥīḥ*, the great hadith compilation of al-Bukhārī, for example: one tradition holds that it is “the most calumnious lie” to make false claims about what one has dreamt (*min afrā al-firā an yuriya ‘aynayhi mā lam tara: Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* 7043 [standard hadith numbering: this is used in all printed and online editions of the collection]).

6 Traumatic cases further complicate this picture: certain dreams refuse to be forgotten. But this is anomalous, and hence pathologized.

hand, our sense of the “reality” of our dreams is confounded by the apparently universal experience of forgetting them, often almost as quickly as we can speak of them. It is a frustrating phenomenon, especially insofar as this tendency only serves to underscore the supposed meaningfulness of those dreams which are *not* forgotten immediately. On the other hand, despite our certainty that at least some dreams are meaningful in at least some sense, we dismiss them (all) because they are fantastic. This makes them morally meaningless, in terms of culpability: the hungover man rues his actions of the night before (even when he cannot recall them!); the dreamer does not feel any compunction about having, shall we say, indulged a fantasy in the harmless arena of unconsciousness.<sup>7</sup>

The problem of the ephemeral nature of dreams, however meaningful they may be taken to be, is compounded by their peculiar epistemological demands.<sup>8</sup> Most of us acknowledge with Descartes that we cannot be sure, when dreaming, that we are not awake and truly experiencing what happens in our dreams – a few of us insist that they always know the difference, but

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<sup>7</sup> The purported ontological emptiness of dreams is often assumed to negate their moral value. There is today a widespread presumption that dreams are devoid of any such moral content because they are formed entirely by the fancy of the dreamer alone. An illustration: in an open letter to his political opponents in December 2019, then-president Trump likened himself – not for the first time, so apparently with some conviction – to those accused in the Salem Witch Trials. In itself, Trump’s nonsense is never philosophically interesting, but the responses in two major news outlets to this claim were striking: both *CNN* and *The Guardian* immediately pointed out the absurdity of such a comparison by referring to the admission, in the Trials, of evidence from dreams. *CNN*’s comment provided three counts of absurdity in the comparison: “nineteen innocent people were hanged ..., the court accepted ‘spectral evidence’ from dreams, [and] some of the accused were tortured into confessions” (*CNN*, <https://edition.cnn.com/2019/12/17/politics/fact-check-trump-impeachment-letter-to-pelosi/index.html>, last accessed on Dec. 28, 2019.) More tellingly, *The Guardian*, after noting the nineteen historical victims, wrote simply: “‘Spectral evidence’ was admissible in the trials – evidence where a witness had a dream, or apparition, which featured the alleged witch engaged in dark deeds. Spectral evidence is yet to feature in Trump’s impeachment hearings” (*The Guardian*, <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2019/dec/17/five-highlights-trump-angry-bizarre-letter-pelosi-house-impeachment>, last accessed on Dec. 28, 2019). Snark notwithstanding, it is revealing that these publications held the participants’ belief in veridical dreaming to be the most outrageous element of the Trials. One need not propose that evidence from dreams should be honored in any legal proceedings, criminal or otherwise, but it is notable that of all the alien aspects of the Trials, however infamous or arcane, “spectral dream” testimony could be regarded by a modern audience as the most patently ridiculous.

<sup>8</sup> The modern psychoanalytical approach to dreams is not under consideration here, but Freud is generally considered the most well-known figure in modern times to stress that dreams are meaningful psychological states. Freud knew the Aristotelian material well (see Gallop, *Aristotle on Sleep and Dreams* [see note 1], 38–42).

we do not believe them.<sup>9</sup> The ephemerality of our awareness in the dream state is such that we forget even the certainty with which we experienced the event, and cannot believe that we were so deluded. Yet we do *feel* something upon waking. We grieve the loss of boons and booty amassed in sleep, if only for a moment; or we wake up and remain terrified, cursing some abusive fiend. It was not “real”: it was confined to our imagination, but even after we relegate the dreamt experience, it remains fascinatingly important to us. Some echo of that dreamish certainty lingers in us, transposed into hope, or wished-for insight.

These factors have conditioned philosophical discourse on the nature of dreaming in spite of Aristotle’s sober analysis in the dream-treatises. Dreams are meaningful, at least in a very limited sense (i.e., intelligible); thus, they have some bearing on reality, at least for the person dreaming, and they can convey a distinct sense of realism while the dreamer is in the dream-state. If they are intelligible and they participate even reflexively in the fabric of our personal beliefs about the world around us, then they are an aspect of reality. Finally, dreams have an effect upon us, however we might try to resist them: they generate feelings.

In this paper, we will present a philosophical justification for this impression derived from the Arabic reception of Aristotle’s position and informed by the ancient and late ancient Greek thinkers. Our aim is to examine the proposition that dreams might be considered superior vehicles for the apprehension of truth (“reality”) compared to other forms of cognition.

## Aristotle and the Arabic Tradition

In the relevant treatises of the *Parva naturalia*, Aristotle sought to explain these feelings, and to provide a “natural” account of dream experience. But by explaining perception with the reception and representation of forms, divorced from their subjects’ matter, he inadvertently opened the gate to a countervailing epistemology. Philosophers in the classical Arabic tradition, taking Aristotle’s forms quite seriously but influenced by the Platonic trends of late antiquity, considered the immaculate status of forms lodged in the internal faculties of the soul as opposed to their degraded, hindered, or wrongly apprehended status when obtained by means of the external senses alone. In the

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<sup>9</sup> The same phenomenon appears in Spanish Baroque tragedies; see the contribution to this volume by Emmy Herland. See also the contribution by Christa Agnes Tuczay.



“Metaphysics” of *al-Shifāʾ*, for example, Avicenna argued that “forms in the imagination are not weaker than the sensible [forms], but are greater in influence and *clarity*, as one sees in sleep.”<sup>10</sup> The reference to sleep is meant to be a persuasive justification, for in the classical tradition of philosophy in Arabic, it was commonly held that dreamt experience is somehow more “real” than wakeful sense perception. In this paper, we will present various claims to that effect, and trace their late ancient and ancient antecedents.

It is important to point out, first, what we are *not* attempting to claim here. To say that philosophers asserted that dreamt experience can be, or always is, more “real” than ordinary waking experience is not to claim that a medieval Muslim would prefer dreaming to waking life. Nor do we argue that Muslim philosophers were *necessarily* predisposed to justifying the veridical nature of dreams due to religious commitments, although Quranic and traditional cases could certainly be adduced in such arguments.<sup>11</sup> Still less would we posit some anthropological quirk by which the “Oriental” mind repairs eagerly to the decadent delusions of the bed-chamber.<sup>12</sup> Instead, we find that the validation of dreamt experience was conditioned by a robust epistemology derived ultimately from Aristotelian and Neoplatonic sources, that its *locus classicus* is to be found in the ninth-century Arabic adaptation of Aristotle’s *Parva naturalia*, and that its application, far from being an invitation to the vivid life of sleep, was rather a rigorous elaboration of Aristotelian epistemology which happened quite nicely to serve the pressing theological need to justify prophecy.<sup>13</sup> In order to make these

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**10** Avicenna, *The Metaphysics of The Healing*, trans. Michael Marmura (Provo, UT: Brigham Young University Press, 2005), 356. On this passage, see David Bennett, “Avicenna’s Dreaming in Context,” *Forms of Representation in the Aristotelian Tradition*, ed. Christina Thomsen Thörnqvist and Juhana Toivanen, Vol. 2: *Dreaming* (Leiden: Brill, forthcoming).

**11** The hadith cited in note 5, above, is one of many traditions ascribed to the Prophet concerning the validity of dreams for information about the religious and secular universe. See J. C. Lamoreaux, *The Early Muslim Tradition of Dream Interpretation* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2002), 116–20. See also various works on this subject by Leah Kinberg, especially “Literal Dreams and Prophetic *ḥadīth* in Classical Islam: A Comparison of Two Ways of Legitimation,” *Der Islam* 70.2 (1993): 279–300, and “Qur’ān and *Ḥadīth*: A Struggle for Supremacy as Reflected in Dream Narratives,” in *Dreaming Across Boundaries: The Interpretation of Dreams in Islamic Lands*, ed. Louise Marlow (Boston, MA: Ilex Foundation, 2008), 25–49.

**12** Consider a typical early twentieth-century Orientalist claim: “It is plain, I think, and admitted that the conception of the Unseen is much more immediate and real to the Oriental than to the western peoples” (D. B. MacDonald, *The Religious Attitude and Life in Islam* [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1912], 3).

**13** Since prophetic revelation operates according to the same principles as dream-visions, discussions of dreaming often occur in the context of theories of prophecy (especially in holistic epistemologies, like Avicenna’s). It is clear that some of the figures we discuss (e.g., al-Kindi:

points, we will first present argumentation on the veridical nature of dreams in Arabic philosophy, followed by a survey of the Neoplatonic positions which demonstrably influenced the adaptation of the *Parva naturalia*. We will conclude with a theoretical reflection on how this assertion, that dreamt experience is somehow at least as “real” as wakeful experience, can and cannot contribute to contemporary dream studies.

## The Arabic *Parva naturalia*

The provenance and peculiarity of the ninth-century Arabic adaptation of the collection of Aristotelian treatises known as the *Parva naturalia* (which include the treatises on sleep and dreaming) has been established conclusively by Rotraud Hansberger.<sup>14</sup> She has documented its substantial influence on Arabic philosophy, and is currently editing the only extant manuscript of the work, which was only recently recovered (1985). Rather than faithfully reproducing Aristotle’s demonstration in the treatises on sleep and dreams that dreams do not come from a divine source, the adaptation works from the assumption that “divination in dreams is not only possible, but a fact of life.”<sup>15</sup> Here we are not concerned with the divine origin of dreams so much as we are with the epistemological structure according to which dream-images are processed, which secures their ontological status as “real.” The “adaptor” of the text was an early (Arabic) advocate for the system of internal senses which would ultimately be codified by Avicenna.<sup>16</sup> Any such facultative arrangement requires a theory as to how sensible (material) objects come to be perceived in the immaterial intellect; indeed, it is to this problem to which all iterations of Aristotelian epistemology must be devoted.<sup>17</sup> Contemporary Arabic theologians, like the Greek materialists before them, tried to evade the problem by

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see 239–40, below.) considered dreams *only* insofar as they were divinatory, revealing future events.

**14** See Rotraud Hansberger, “How Aristotle Came to Believe in God-given Dreams,” *Dreaming Across Boundaries*, ed. Louise Marlow (Boston, MA: Ilex Foundation, 2008), 50–77, and for a general account of the work, Rotraud Hansberger, “*Kitāb al-Ḥiss wa-l-maḥsūs*: Aristotle’s *Parva naturalia* in Arabic Guise,” *Les Parva naturalia d’Aristote: Fortune antique et médiévale*, ed. C. Grellard and P.-M. Morel (Paris: Sorbonne, 2010), 143–62.

**15** Hansberger, “How Aristotle” (see note 14), 54.

**16** Elsewhere, Hansberger establishes that the adaptor’s three-faculty system is Galenic (*al-mutakhayyila*, *al-fikr*, and *al-dhikr*, situated in the brain): see “Arabic Guise” (see note 14), 145–46.

**17** For an in-depth treatment of this foundational issue in sense-perception, see Victor Caston, “The Spirit and the Letter: Aristotle on Perception,” *Metaphysics, Soul, and Ethics in Ancient Thought*, ed. Ricardo Salles (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 245–320.

analyzing perception as a material process and reducing mental activity to the accidental concomitants of that process. In the Arabic *Parva naturalia*, “things” present a Russian-doll configuration of forms: from outside to inside, the “corporeal,” “spiritual,” and “intellectual” forms, each the “image” of that which it encloses.<sup>18</sup> The corporeal form is perceived by the senses, whereas a dreamer can obtain the spiritual form.

This hierarchical arrangement of forms governs the communications between receptive and active faculties, whether the subject is awake or asleep; it serves as that which links up a continuum comprised of the external world, the subject, and whatever supervening cosmological components one may wish to posit. The more “inner” forms are nested in the sensible form when it is retrieved by the senses. The higher faculties of the soul, or the entity/entities which operate beyond the soul, may communicate to what is “below” them using the DNA-like kernels of the intellectual forms, from which a well-trained intermediate sense might extrapolate spiritual forms. The sense of communication is further emphasized by the adaptor’s substitution of “words” and “cognizable content” (*kalimāt*; *ma’ānī*<sup>19</sup>) for spiritual and intellectual forms, respectively.<sup>20</sup> “Well-trained” is the crucial concept here: decoding these *ma’ānī* sent from beyond<sup>21</sup> may prove too difficult for the “thinking” faculty of the soul, which may need to take recourse in a skilled dream-interpreter when indecipherable information is transmitted in dreams. Moreover, not every form experienced in dreams is a coded transmission from beyond; the internal faculties may well be rummaging about in each other’s storehouses, picking out spiritual forms from the memory, for example.<sup>22</sup> The upshot is that the dreamer may be deluded as to the origin and the import of forms experienced in dreams, but this does nothing to detract from the epistemological quality of

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**18** Hansberger, “How Aristotle” (see note 14), 57. Hansberger’s reading is summarized by Luis Xavier López-Farjeat, “Post Avicennian philosophy in the Muslim West: Ibn Bājja, Ibn Rushd and Ibn Khaldūn on veridical dreams and prophecy,” in *Islamic Philosophy from the 12th to the 14th Century*, ed. Abdelkader al-Ghouz (Bonn: Bonn University Press, 2018), 215–17.

**19** On this term (sing. *ma’nā*), translated here as “cognizable content,” and recurring throughout this article as a technical term, see David Bennett, “Introducing the *ma’nā*,” *Forms of Representation in the Aristotelian Tradition*, vol. 3: *Concept Formation*, ed. Christina Thomsen Thörnqvist and Juhana Toivanen (Leiden: Brill, forthcoming). For a broader treatment of the term, particularly in the literary context, see: Alexander Key, *Language between God and the Poets* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2018). Here, we employ the transliterated Arabic term *ma’nā* (pl. *ma’ānī*), as every attempt to translate it runs into difficulties.

**20** See Hansberger, “How Aristotle” (see note 14), 58.

**21** Generally, from the intellect, but this entity is somewhat inchoate in the text.

**22** Hansberger, “How Aristotle” (see note 14), 60.

the reception of those forms: it is more accurate, because it deals with the more “inner” form of its objects. In the dreaming state, the common sense, which had previously “looked at [the forms of things] when they were corporeal and in motion, [will now] look at them being at rest and motionless within the formative faculty (*al-muṣawwir*), and they are more perfect and excellent when at rest than when they are moving.” (*K. al-Ḥiss* 40b)<sup>23</sup>

Thus, the Arabic adaptor of the text, holding that the spiritual *phase* of perception is “more perfect and nobler” (*K. al-Ḥiss* 21b) than the corporeal, introduced a preference for experience obtained in sleep over that obtained by ordinary waking sense perception which would have been unthinkable in the Aristotelian original. With this “Aristotelian” endorsement, that attitude was reiterated in later Arabic and Hebrew philosophy.<sup>24</sup> We will examine how this attitude is manifest in Avicenna’s thought below, but first we should consider its relevance to ninth- and tenth-century thought generally.

## Al-Kindī

As Hansberger has established, the adaptation of the *Parva naturalia* was certainly a product of the “al-Kindī circle,” i.e., the same group of translators who attributed selections of Plotinus’s *Enneads* to Aristotle. In *On First Philosophy*, his most systematic surviving treatise, al-Kindī (d. ca. 870 C.E.) considers “perception” (in his rubric, *wujūd*) according to two aspects: “one is nearer to us but further from nature, namely the perception of the senses [... whereas] the other is closer to nature and further from us.”<sup>25</sup> The former sort of sense-perception is unstable (the objects “flow, and are in constant change”), but it is immediate and effortless. It is the transient nature of its objects that renders this sort of perception “unstable,” however, not the failure of the senses: the forms of their objects are reliably transmitted to the imagination, though the objects perish. The second kind of perception, “closer to nature and further from us,” is “the perception of the intellect” (*Al-Kindī*, 14). As in the Arabic *Parva naturalia*, this mode perceives *ma‘ānī* intellectually, leading to the following (unmistakably Platonic) expression of the underlying dichotomy:

<sup>23</sup> This is the manuscript of the Arabic adaptation, kindly provided to me by Rotraud Hansberger, trans. Hansberger, “How Aristotle” (see note 14), 61.

<sup>24</sup> Hansberger presents occasions where Avicenna, Ibn ‘Ezra, Ibn Bājja, and Ibn Rushd deployed the text to affirm “divinatory” dreams: “How Aristotle” (see note 14), 65–68.

<sup>25</sup> Trans. Peter Adamson and Peter Pormann, in *The Philosophical Works of al-Kindī* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2012), 14. This work is cited as *al-Kindī* hereafter.

Since the senses perceive individuals, all the sensibles that are represented in the soul are represented by the power that uses the senses. Conversely no concept (*ma'nā*) of a species, or of what is above species [i.e. genera], is represented by the soul using an image, because every image is sensible. Instead, it is affirmed as true in the soul and is absolutely certain, because the intellectual principles that are necessarily intelligible are true. (*Al-Kindī*, 15)

Quite independently of the problem of dreams, al-Kindī has privileged all such non-sensible realities as intrinsically “true.” This epistemological stance establishes the framework for al-Kindī’s explanation of dreams. In an independent treatise, *Risāla fī Māhiyyat al-nawm wa-al-ru’yā* (“On the essence of sleep and dreams”),<sup>26</sup> he describes the functions of *phantasía* (the imagination, as an Aristotelian power of the soul), which he calls the “formative” (*al-muṣawwira*) faculty: it “makes us perceive the forms of individual things, without matter” (*Al-Kindī*, 125). The production of sensible forms for notions or *ma’ānī* whose physical substrata are not present is the imagination’s work, and it is made easier when the sense organs do not interfere by proffering their own incoming sensible forms; “therefore,” al-Kindī concludes, “the [sensible] form perceived in sleep is more perfect and better” (*Al-Kindī*, 127).

This explanation accounts for the vividness of dreamt experience, but what sort of forms are presented? A deficient imagination may struggle to depict coherent images at all, let alone find the appropriate vehicles for those *ma’ānī* entertained in the conceptual realm of the soul. Thus, it may make use of symbols, instead of presenting future events precisely as they will come to be (*Al-Kindī*, 129). (As noted above, note 13, al-Kindī is mainly concerned with divinatory dreams.) A more pressing question is whence these forms, whether symbolic or precise imitations, derive, especially if they are meant to represent knowledge of future events. Here, al-Kindī leans explicitly and repeatedly on Plato: the soul knows all things, sensible and intelligible, and has unlimited access to them.<sup>27</sup> Yet although al-Kindī claims to have given “the reason for the various ways that

<sup>26</sup> Translated in *al-Kindī*, 122–33. Al-Kindī explicitly refers to *phantasía*, transliterating the Greek term into Arabic.

<sup>27</sup> *Al-Kindī*, 128–9. On al-Kindī’s brand of Platonism, see Gerhard Endress, “Al-Kindī über die Wiedererinnerung der Seele: Arabischer Platonismus und die Legitimation der Wissenschaften im Islam,” *Oriens* 34 (1994): 174–221. Interestingly, when al-Kindī is in a more Aristotelian mood (by way of Alexander of Aphrodisias), he writes of the “First Intellect,” beyond the actual, acquired, and potential intellects – i.e., transcending the human individual – “which is always actually grasping all the intelligibles,” as Adamson and Pormann put it. See *al-Kindī*, 93–98 for a brief introduction to and English translation of “On the Intellect”; for the Arabic text and a more thorough study of the treatise, see Jean Jolivet, *L’Intellect selon Kindī* (Leiden: Brill, 1971).

dreams convey foreknowledge” (*Al-Kindī*, 129), he has done nothing of that sort: for why would any particular configuration of sensible and intelligible information be transmitted *from the future*, unless he were also to claim that the soul is somehow beyond time? This is implied in his Platonizing scheme, but he does not say as much, nor does he invoke any other agent who might have access to such information. (An obvious candidate would be: God.) This is the problem with access to the intelligible world in Platonic systems generally: given atemporal omniscience, how would you pick out from a dream that your mother-in-law is coming to visit next Tuesday?

For al-Kindī, dreams are conspicuous in that they enable a faculty of the soul (*al-muṣawwira*, whose business is the forms) to manipulate sensible forms (taken from the limitless storehouse of the soul) in order more expertly to present intelligible forms.

## Al-Fārābī and Avicenna

Al-Kindī’s stark dichotomy between sensible and intelligible objects is not reflected among subsequent philosophers in the Arabic tradition: most tried to establish how they are connected. The more intricate faculty psychology of al-Fārābī (d. 950)<sup>28</sup> and Avicenna (d. 1037)<sup>29</sup> retained one aspect of al-Kindī’s model, however: the general privileging of the objects of the internal senses. In al-Fārābī, the faculty of imagination (now *al-quwwa al-mutakhayyila*) works with the impressions (*rusūm*) in the common sense – that is, the raw material of past sense perception. This is how imagination works in general; in sleep, when the psychic system is not so disturbed by incoming sense data, the imagination is more free to play with these impressions, and can perform its characteristically Farabian function of imitation (*muḥākāh*) of super-sensible realities.<sup>30</sup> Imitation by way of sensible impressions is

<sup>28</sup> For previous studies on al-Fārābī’s treatment of dreams and prophecy more generally, see M. Wali Ur-Rahman, “Al-Fārābī and His Theory of Dreams,” *Islamic Culture* 10 (1936): 137–52; Richard Walzer, “Al-Fārābī’s Theory of Prophecy and Divination,” *Journal of Hellenic Studies* 77.1 (1957): 142–48; (most importantly) Hans Daiber, “Prophetie und Ethik bei Fārābī (gest. 339/950),” *L’homme et son univers au moyen âge*, ed. Christian Wenin (Louvain-La Neuve: Éditions de l’Institut supérieur de philosophie, 1986), 2.729–53. Aspects of al-Fārābī’s dream theory were circulated ascribed to Aristotle: see Bennett, “Avicenna’s” (see note 10).

<sup>29</sup> See Bennett, “Avicenna’s Dreaming in Context” (see note 10), for a more thorough treatment of Avicenna’s work on this topic.

<sup>30</sup> See Hansberger, “How Aristotle” (see note 14), 73–4 for a succinct explanation of this process. As Hansberger points out there, this process clearly echoes the Arabic *Parva naturalia*

the key here, because otherwise there would be no way to perceptively grasp such realities: thus, a diligent imagination can receive and represent prophetic information broadcast by the Active Intellect.<sup>31</sup> In his own way, al-Fārābī saves two important aspects of Aristotelian epistemology here: the soul cannot process content unless it is transmuted into objects of sensation; and dreaming is a sort of sense-perception after the fact, i.e., when the external senses are inactive, the impressed sensible objects are the material sculpted by the imagination. The imitative function of the imagination allows for another, prophetic, dimension in human epistemology.

It is in Avicenna's psychology, however, that the theory of dreams is most thoroughly integrated into epistemology. In an autobiographical text, he declares that difficult philosophical problems would be resolved for him by recourse to dreams: "whenever I fell asleep, I would see those very problems in my dream; and many problems became clear to me while asleep."<sup>32</sup> The pervasiveness of dream theory in Avicenna's psychological writings is well-attested,<sup>33</sup> so here we will simply quote the authority Dimitri Gutas:

The sleeper whose rational soul is strong, has a balanced temperament, and is not distracted by the imagination and the other senses, both external and internal, 'perceives the unseen things (*mughayyabāt*) by Ascertain[ing] [Gutas' emphatic capitalization] them either as they are in themselves or through any images for them.'<sup>34</sup>

The emphasis throughout Avicenna's psychological writings is on access to the "unseen" (as a category, *al-ghayb*) by means of dreams: crucially, this is a realm of cognizable content, that is, of *ma'ānī*, existing "in the knowledge of God and the intellect-angels in one way, and ... in the souls of the celestial agents in another way" (*al-Nafs*, 178.17–18). Unlike al-Kindī's conceptual *ma'ānī*, these *ma'ānī* are not intelligible forms in need of sensible garb; as *ma'ānī* they are in themselves particular, and thus constitutive of temporal realities – this is how knowledge of the future may be obtained. A Kindian dream may provide you with a horse leaping over a mushroom (each element a stable, atemporal form: even

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adaptation, in which "the Intellect 'dresses' up the pure intellectual forms in spiritual forms before they can be received by the human soul": "How Aristotle," 74.

<sup>31</sup> For a far more nuanced discussion of this process, see Daiber, "Prophetic" (see note 28).

<sup>32</sup> Trans. Dimitri Gutas, in his *Avicenna and the Aristotelian Tradition*, 2nd ed. (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2014), 17. This passage comes right after the infamous claim that he would take draughts of wine to stave off drowsiness.

<sup>33</sup> See Bennett, "Avicenna's Dreaming in Context" (see note 10).

<sup>34</sup> Gutas, *Avicenna* (see note 32), 209. The text quoted comes from Avicenna, *Avicenna's De Anima: Being the Psychological Part of the Kitāb al-Shifā'*, ed. Fazlur Rahman (London: Oxford University Press, 1959), 173.14 (hereafter referred to as *al-Nafs*).

the act of “leaping”), whereas for Avicenna, there is a *maʿnā* for this particular horse leaping in this way over this mushroom at this specific time.<sup>35</sup> Moreover, the reason dreaming works for the acquisition of scientific knowledge is because it involves particular instances of cognizable content: otherwise you would just get absolutely abstract realities instead of concrete facts.

Avicenna’s attitude toward dreaming and scientific knowledge is reflected in various accounts of intellectual life in tenth-century Baghdad; Avicenna had simply systematized the process that others had taken for granted. Among the so-called “Baghdad Peripatetics,” for example, a discussion between the philosopher al-ʿArūḍī and a certain Christian, Ibn ʿUbayd, is related. The latter asks the former why he so rarely dreams, and al-ʿArūḍī responds that there are two possible causes: either because of “the soul’s turbidity and ignorance” (i.e., you are too stupid), or because of great scientific prowess, such that the soul’s “dreaming resembles its being awake” (i.e., you are too smart). In the latter case,

the soul does not require anything by way of symbol and semblance from his dreams, for his dream state is equivalent to his waking state. The power that the soul has while dreaming is sometimes transformed into intuitive knowledge of human nature ... and divination ... when it is awake, or into an intellectual power of inference and deduction, or into an apprehension of reality that occurs without the benefit of intermediaries, organ, or instrument.<sup>36</sup>

This account reflects the Kindian model of privileged forms of knowledge, but as with Avicenna, what is obtained is particularized: so much so, that it can easily be mistaken for waking experience.

## Perspectives on the Problem from Systematic Theology

While al-Kindī had stressed the fallibility of the senses due to the inherent transience of their objects, he never seems to have conceived of the Cartesian

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<sup>35</sup> The role of *maʿānī* in Avicenna’s philosophy has bothered scholars for a long time. See David Bennett, “Introducing the *maʿnā*,” *Forms of Representation in the Aristotelian Tradition*, ed. Christina Thomsen Thörnqvist and Juhana Toivanen, vol. 3: *Concept Formation* (Leiden: Brill, forthcoming).

<sup>36</sup> Al-Tawḥīdī is the source of this story: here, I am citing the summary presented by Joel L. Kraemer, *Philosophy in the Renaissance of Islam: Abū Sulaymān al-Sijistānī and His Circle*. Studies in Islamic Culture and History Series, 8 (Leiden: Brill, 1986), 54.



concern that we cannot be sure that we are not, now, dreaming. As mentioned before, al-Ghazālī (d. 1111) famously raised that skeptical argument in *al-Munqidh*, a stylized intellectual autobiography. The author, dramatizing his hesitation to accept uncritically the evidence of his senses and his reason in turn, imagines the objects of sense themselves (*al-maḥsūsāt*) challenging his skepticism by invoking the “but how do you know you’re not dreaming?” argument: rather heavy artillery to deploy, insofar as it damages the credibility of reason and sensation indiscriminately. The author is profoundly affected by doubts as to whether he can justify his wakeful certainty about anything, and is only prevented from starving by divine intervention.<sup>37</sup> Dream skepticism is only tangentially of interest for us here, and only so because it seems to appeal to people making claims about the “reality” of dreams. Al-Ghazālī’s thought experiment is relevant, however, because it comes (fancifully) from the objects of sense themselves, suggesting that they themselves are indistinguishable from objects perceived in dreams: the veridicality of sense objects is relative to a particular “state” (*ḥāla*), such that dream objects are real whenever one dreams, and sense objects are real whenever one senses (while awake).

Al-Ghazālī was (for the most part) an Ash‘arite-leaning theologian, and he would have known the case of the ninth-century theologian Ṣāliḥ Qubba:

[Ṣāliḥ Qubba] was once asked what would happen if he were in Basra, and dreamt that he was in China. He said: I am in China when I dream that I am in China. He was then asked: But suppose your leg were tied to the leg of someone in Iraq, and you dreamt you were in China? He said: I would be in China, even if my leg were tied to the leg of someone in Iraq.<sup>38</sup>

This state-dependent realism may validate the experience of the dreamer, but it demonstrably fails empirical verification: “real for me with respect to my current state” is a very weak sort of reality.

Al-Ghazālī was certainly familiar with Avicenna’s discussions about dreams: indeed, he translated (into Arabic) Avicenna’s Persian *Dāneshnāme-ye ‘Alā’ī*, a philosophical summa which included the epistemology establishing access to “unseen” knowledge in dreams.<sup>39</sup> Despite his reservations about Avicennan philosophy, al-

<sup>37</sup> The passage, in *al-Munqidh*, 66–67, is one of the most celebrated in Medieval philosophy. The English is in McCarthy, §§12–15 (the English translation is printed in various sources with different paginations).

<sup>38</sup> Al-Ash‘arī, *Maqālāt al-islāmiyyīn*, ed. Helmut Ritter. 4th ed. (1929; Beirut: Klaus Schwarz Verlag, 2005), 407, trans. Bennett.

<sup>39</sup> On this text, *Maqāṣid al-falāsifa* (“Aims of the Philosophers”), ed. S. Dunyā (Cairo: Dār al-Ma‘ārif, 1965), which enjoyed a robust *Nachleben* in the Latin tradition, see Gutas, *Avicenna* (see note 32), 118–19; Ayman Shihadeh, “New Light on the Reception of al-Ghazālī’s *Doctrines of the Philosophers* (*Maqāṣid al-Falāsifa*),” *In the Age of Averroes: Arabic Philosophy in the*

Ghazālī faithfully represented the epistemological system, complete with the Active Intellect’s emanation of “instances of knowledge” (*‘ilm*), allowing the individual soul to “perceive knowledge of the unseen.”<sup>40</sup> The great project, begun by al-Fārābī and thoroughly refined by Avicenna, to bind coherently a natural account of dreams with a theory of prophecy, became a recognizable doctrine, a staple of Arabic Aristotelianism.

## Averroes

Al-Ghazālī uses the “familiar” experience of true dreams leading to knowledge of the “Unseen” without recourse to the senses as a stock example of those facts which might be unbelievable were they not so frequently attested.<sup>41</sup> This is a recurring claim in the Arabic tradition, made most forcibly in Averroes’s (d. 1198) *Talkhīṣ* (“Epitome”) of the aforementioned Arabic adaptation of the *Parva naturalia*.<sup>42</sup> However much we might want to reject divinatory dreams as unbelievable, Averroes writes, “there is not a person who has not at times had dreams that warn him of that which will happen to him in the future.”<sup>43</sup> It is absurd, Averroes argues, for something so well-attested to be false.<sup>44</sup> With respect to the

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*Sixth/Twelfth Century*, ed. Peter Adamson (London: Warburg, 2011), 77–92; M. A. al-Akīti, “The Three Properties of Prophethood in Certain Works of Avicenna and al-Ghazālī,” *Interpreting Avicenna: Science and Philosophy in Medieval Islam*, ed. Jon McGinnis with David C. Reisman (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2004), 189–212.

<sup>40</sup> *Maqāṣid*, Fifth Discourse, 371 and 376; see Bennett, “Avicenna’s Dreaming in Context” (see note 9).

<sup>41</sup> Al-Ghazālī, *Munqidh*, 125.14–16 (= trans. McCarthy, *Deliverance*, §143); see also *Munqidh*, 111.14–16 (= trans. McCarthy, §130).

<sup>42</sup> Averroes’s commentary, therefore, is upon a text very different from the Aristotelian original. For the English translation, see Harry Blumberg: *Epitome of Parva naturalia* (Cambridge, MA: Medieval Academy of America, 1961) (hereafter, “*Epitome*”); Arabic edition (cited below): Averroes, *Talkhīṣ Kitāb al-Ḥiss wa-al-maḥsūs*, ed. Harry Blumberg (Cambridge, MA: Medieval Academy of America, 1972). That Averroes, who was known to be a particularly faithful interpreter of Aristotle, seemed to hold such un-Aristotelian views confounded scholars until the original Arabic adaptation of Aristotle’s *Parva naturalia* was recovered; see now Rotraud Hansberger, “Averroes on Divinatory Dreaming,” *Forms of Representation in the Aristotelian Tradition*, ed. Christina Thomsen Thörnqvist and Juhana Toivanen, vol. 2: *Dreaming* (Leiden: Brill, forthcoming), on the precise mechanisms for dream experience in Averroes.

<sup>43</sup> *Epitome*, 39 (unless otherwise indicated, we use Blumberg’s translations) = *Talkhīṣ*, 66. 7–8.

<sup>44</sup> *Epitome*, 40 = *Talkhīṣ*, 67.2.

nature of dreams, Averroes puts aside this question as to whether they are “real,” distinguishing them according to their putative causes:

The names [people give to types of dreams] only differ according to what the majority of people believe about their causes: that is the well-known state of affairs. People believe that dreams come from angels, magical-workings come from the *jinn*, and revelation comes from God – with or without some particular intermediary. Moreover, prophecy is distinguished by people only insofar as it brings recognition of knowable things (*al-ta’rif bil-umūr al-‘il-miyya*), such as the recognition of the essence of happiness, or the recognition of those things which bring happiness. For we only obtain some recognition of them by virtue of existing things. And Aristotle only talks about this sort of thing when it comes to dreams.<sup>45</sup>

Although, as we shall see, Averroes was to produce a more detailed analysis of the objects of dreams, it is worth noting his careful wording concerning what is, as it were, perceived – in this case through prophecy, which apparently operates in the same way as dreaming. “Recognition” is the broadest epistemological formulation possible; and “knowable things” includes both the essences of conceptual realities and the sorts of things with which they are associated.

Even when he is ostensibly describing the nature and cause of sleep, Averroes is working from a model in which knowledge is untainted by sense perception. For Averroes, the “proof (*al-dalīl ‘alā* ...) that sleep is the submergence of the common sense into the interior of the body” is just that it also happens when we are awake: in such cases, we stop noticing objects of sensation, the common sense attends to the cogitative faculty (*al-quwwa al-mufakkira*), which is “strengthened” (*taqwā*) when the senses are quiescent. For this reason, a person “will be able to perceive future events during sleep, whereas he will not be able to perceive them in waking.”<sup>46</sup> Inspired perhaps by this invocation of the helping role of the common sense, Averroes goes on to present the pithiest account of the epistemological model he supports: the common sense presents an inscription (*rasm*) of what has been sensed; the imagination (*al-khayāl*) “purifies” it (*yusaffihī*); finally, the cogitative faculty presents it.<sup>47</sup> This process is unique to humans, and Averroes explains

<sup>45</sup> *Epitome*, 40 (significantly altered from Blumberg’s translation) = *Talkhiṣ*, 67.5–11.

<sup>46</sup> *Epitome*, 33 (slightly altered) = *Talkhiṣ*, 54.12–55.4. Blumberg laboriously attempts to defuse this sentiment by citing the proper Aristotelian explanation for “dreams that portend future events” (*De div. 1*, 463a23–31), i.e., mundane dreams about everyday activities which cannot help but provide a ground upon which to act, but which are hardly miraculous: *Epitome*, 98n.21. The clarity of thought which comes from detaching from the senses is also emphasized by al-Kindī in the same context, in his treatise “On the Essence of Sleep and Dreams” (see note 26), 125–6.

<sup>47</sup> *Talkhiṣ*, 55.4–5 (see *Epitome*, 33: the verb “to present s.t.” [*tuḥḍiruhu*] is repeated in two steps, as in my paraphrase).

that it operates this way “because the *maʿnā* which is perceived by cogitation is spiritual (*rūḥānī*); it requires the aid of these faculties for the perception of that which is particular to it.”<sup>48</sup> Because animals lack this “intellectual faculty” (*quwwa ʿaqliyya*), they can only obtain the (sensible) inscriptions and their “outer shells” (*qushūr*).<sup>49</sup> In other words, the extraordinary human aptitude allows for a continuity of representation, from the spiritual *maʿnā* cognized to the inscription obtained upon sense-perception. Included in this scheme is the explanation for how the subject can seem to perceive in the dream state: inscriptions are fashioned to particularize the cognized content in the higher faculties. Thus, Aristotle’s rejection of sensation during sleep is preserved without making us dream about purely abstract, immaterial realities.<sup>50</sup>

This is how dreams are localized, or colloquialized: through the application of *rusūm* to *maʿānī* so that they may be perceived as particulars (*maʿānī* are particularized, but they have no sensible qualities intrinsically: thus, my common sense [?] may provide a camel, while yours provides an ox).

We have now seen the evolution of what we can call the “ontology” of dreams in the Arabic Aristotelian tradition, from its introduction in the intervention of the adaptor of the *Parva naturalia* back to that same text again, through the eyes of Averroes. We have only considered a few of the major philosophers writing in Arabic, but the ontological properties of dream-images were considered throughout the tradition,<sup>51</sup> and continued to command the attention of medieval Latin philosophy with the translated versions of Avicennan and Averroean epistemology. We have tried so far as possible to eschew mystical or religious accounts, preferring to establish the philosophical grounds for suspecting that dream-images must be naturalized in any complete epistemology – upon analysis, as pre-eminent among objects of perception and/or knowledge. In order to establish that this perspective was not intrinsically Muslim, or guided by Muslim concerns, we will now turn to the Neoplatonic background of the Arabic *Parva naturalia* adaptation.

48 *Epitome*, 34 (trans. Blumberg, modified) = *Talkhīṣ*, 55.6–7.

49 *Talkhīṣ*, 55.7–8 = *Epitome*, 34.

50 This model is persistent in Islamic thought: for example, “by means of the faculty of imagination, Ibn ʿArabī [d. 1240, a systematic Andalusian Sufi] argues, a dreaming individual is capable of seeing disembodied intelligible entities in the form of corporeal, sensory objects.” Alexander D. Knysh, “Introduction,” *Dreams and Visions in Islamic Societies*, ed. Özgen Felek and Alexander D. Knysh (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2012), 1.

51 Ibn Bājja, for example, had a complicated taxonomy involving four types of spiritual forms: see López-Farjeat, “Post Avicennian” (see note 18), 218. López-Farjeat also considers the attempts of Ibn Khaldūn to simplify the issue.

## Platonizing Aristotle

Whereas Aristotle had discounted the appearances generated by *phantasia* as illusory and false,<sup>52</sup> he had to acknowledge the extensive Hellenistic folk tradition concerning dreams – a tradition to which Plato occasionally pandered. Plato refers to the Homeric image of the “horn” and “ivory” gates, through one or the other of which dreams come, according to their veridical or deceptive nature respectively (*Charm.* 173a). In the *Timaeus*, however, Plato’s speaker (Timaeus) endorses the residual motion theory propounded by Aristotle (45d–46a).

But it is the Platonic model taken more generally which is most productive in the establishment of the claim we have described in the earlier parts of this paper: namely, the model according to which it is only the eternal forms which are genuinely real, and the world as accessed by the senses is as unreal as its constituents, artificial imitations of reality, are. Platonism as well as mainstream Neoplatonism entails (1) an ontological degradation of matter, thus making material perception a lower form of cognition, and (2) an ontological elevation of forms as the constituents of true knowledge.<sup>53</sup> A corollary of these views is that matter, as such, restrains or retards the “true” operation of the soul; only when the soul is detached from its corporeal prison can it be able to grasp reality. This continues in the vein of Orphic and Pythagorean tendencies in Greek thought: only when the soul frees itself, returns to its true nature, may it become properly divine and receptive to prophecy and other divine-like modes of cognition. This divine aspect of the soul is experienced more or less when it is in the regular state of separation that we call sleep (as well as in cases of disease and death). Thus, we have curious cases represented in the Arabic tradition, such as the following pseudo-Aristotelian (again!) text, *Eudemus*, quoted by al-Kindī:

Aristotle has described the case of the Greek king who had difficulty breathing. He continued to waver between life and death for many days. While he recovered, he instructed people in the arts of hidden things. He told them about the souls, the forms,

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<sup>52</sup> See Aristotle’s general account of dreams in *De insomniis* (trans. David Gallop, *Aristotle on Sleep and Dreams* [see note 1]) and also his characterization of dreams as inherently false entities in the *Metaphysics* 5. 1024b17–24 (the *Metaphysics*, Books 1–9, trans. Hugh Tredennick. Loeb Classical Library [Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1933]).

<sup>53</sup> As famously expressed by Plato’s cave simile in the *Republic*, Book 7, 514b–515e. Plato. *Republic*, Books 6–10, trans. Chris Emlyn-Jones and William Preddy. Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013).

and the angels, and provided them with proofs for this. He let some members of his household know how long each of them had to live. When all of what he said was put to the test, none of the subjects exceeded the life span which he had determined for them. He predicted a lunar eclipse which would occur in the land of Greece in the next year, and a flood which would happen somewhere else after two years. And it was as he had said. “Aristotle” explained this in the following way. His soul had this knowledge only because it had nearly departed from the body, and had partially detached itself. Therefore, it saw these things – and how [would it have been] had it really separated from the body! Truly, it would have seen wondrous things from the highest realm.<sup>54</sup>

As in the model informing the Arabic adaptation of the *Parva naturalia*, the real *ma‘ānī* are more revealing; the subject’s access to them is determined by his corresponding divorce from the bodily sensory apparatus. At first, we were suspicious, having found this passage in a minor treatise of al-Kindī: was this simply more of the legendary Arabic tendency of Neoplatonizing Aristotle? Yet even if it fits that description, similar versions of this story, also attributed to Aristotle, turn up in much earlier sources, e.g., Cicero, *De divinatione*, 1.25.53.

Such accounts emphasize the unreality of the sensual world as compared to the *complete* knowledge available to the soul in its separated state. Acquisition of knowledge under such circumstances resembles, or even consists in, divination. But there is nothing specific on the faculty of *phantasía* and its role in the process, which seems to be the major concern of many of the Arabic accounts we have considered. Even if Aristotle maintains in the *De anima* that the products of *phantasía* are for the most part false, and in the *Metaphysics* that they are always false in another sense,<sup>55</sup> there are some Aristotelian elements that are worth exploring in further detail, since they are relevant to the epistemological model adopted in the Arabic tradition.

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<sup>54</sup> The text is found in al-Kindī, *Rasā’il al-Kindī*, ed. Abū Rīda (Cairo: Dār al-Fikr al-‘Arabī, 1950–53), 1.279; trans. (modified) from *al-Kindī*, 117. Cf. Pamela M. Huby, “The Paranormal in the Works of Aristotle and his Circle,” *Apeiron* 13 (1979): 53–62, who reads the report as a case of disembodiment during the critical phase of illness. For a straightforward case of “disembodiment” during sleep, which supposedly convinced “Aristotle” that the soul is separable from the body, see Clearchus [“Klearchos”], fragment 7, in Fritz Wehrli, *Die Schule des Aristoteles*, vol. 3 (Basel: Schwabe, 1948), 11.

<sup>55</sup> *De an.* 3.3, 428a11–12 (hereafter *De an.*), trans. Jonathan Barnes (*The Complete Works of Aristotle*, 2 vols., Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984). See also the *Metaphysics* 5.29, 1024b17–24 (see note 52).

## Aristotelian and Neoplatonic Elements in Medieval Arabic Theories of Dreaming

In *De anima* Aristotle writes:

Generally, about all perception, we can say that a sense is what has the power of receiving into itself the sensible forms of things without the matter, in the way in which a piece of wax takes on the impress of a signet-ring without the iron or gold; what produces the impression is a signet of bronze or gold, but not qua bronze or gold: in a similar way the sense is affected by what is colored or flavored or sounding insofar as each is what it is, but insofar as it is of such and such a sort and according to its form.<sup>56</sup>

This passage was immensely influential in the later commentary tradition. According to Aristotle, forms cannot exist separate from their material substrate: this challenges Plato's view that the forms can exist independently of the things that have a part in the forms. The Arabic *Parva naturalia* accepts both corporeal forms and spiritual forms, which complicates matters: it is neither doctrinaire Aristotelianism nor Platonism. Nevertheless, the Arabic text emphasizes the superiority of spiritual forms over corporeal forms which reflects an ontological hierarchy stressed by Platonism, in particular.

Another passage in *De anima* that has been alluded to, at least by al-Kindī, is the following:

It was a good idea to call the soul "the place of forms", though this description holds only of the thinking soul, and even this is the forms only potentially, not actually.<sup>57</sup>

Despite Aristotle's reservations considering the soul as the place of forms, al-Kindī clearly took this idea and ran with it.<sup>58</sup>

A Greek source of particular interest, which combines Aristotelian and Platonic ideas in a way that anticipates the Arabic *Parva naturalia*, is Synesius's *De insomniis*. Synesius of Cyrene (ca. 370–413) defends the cognitive importance of *phantasia* along Neoplatonic lines in this text against those who would malign it as fancy, who "despise dreams as too accessible a thing, in which the ignorant and the wise have equal privileges."<sup>59</sup> Synesius argues that the imagination is the "sense of senses ... the most general organ of sense and the first body of the soul"

<sup>56</sup> *De an.* 2.12, 424a17–23.

<sup>57</sup> *De an.* 3.4, 429a27–28.

<sup>58</sup> See 239–40, above.

<sup>59</sup> Synesius, translation in Donald A. Russell et al., *Synesius: On Prophecy, Dreams, and Human Imagination: Introduction, Text, Translation, and Interpretative Essays*. Scripta Antiquitatis Posterioris ad Ethicam Religionemque Pertinentia, 24 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2014), 135C–D.

(135D).<sup>60</sup> The external senses are relegated to an ancillary role: they are mere organs, “servants of the common sense, doorkeepers of the living being, as it were, who report to their mistress the sense-impressions from the outside, which knock on the door of the external organs of sense” (136A). These mediating organs serve their “mistress,” and the “unmediated sense,” that is, the imagination, is “more divine and close to the soul” (136B). Like al-Kindi, Synesius doubts the reliability of the external senses (136B–C). The work of the imagination takes place in a pneumatic substrate hovering “between the irrational and the rational, between the incorporeal and the corporeal,” making it difficult for philosophers to grasp (137A). Illnesses and contamination may afflict the pneuma in which the imagination works, leading to the sort of mixed-up dreams which torment those with deficient imaginations.

Finally, an important piece of evidence regarding the influence of Neoplatonic doctrines on Arabic Aristotelianism concerning the reality of dreams is found in Priscian of the Athenian Neoplatonist school, in *Answers to King Khosroes of Persia*, delivered in 531 to Khosroes I of Persia.<sup>61</sup> In this work Priscian briefly refers to Aristotle’s rational and skeptical analysis of prophetic dreams in *De divinatione* which shows that he was familiar with Aristotle’s official account of divination. However, Priscian also alludes to the view that the soul when disconnected from the body receives superior cognitive powers such as precognition. The idea is that the soul increases its cognitive powers when it is free from the inhibiting influence of matter. Now, Priscian’s description of these Platonic ideas recalls strongly the fragments preserved by al-Kindi and Cicero which are attributed to Aristotle. Moreover, Priscian suggests in passing that Aristotle and his followers might have endorsed such a Platonic view on divination:

So, if the soul is separated from the body in sleep, it may be made worthy of visions sent by god – and perhaps Aristotle and some of this school believe this – and receives activities and powers sent by god – which it well and easily holds because it is linked with the intelligibles. Hence even without dreams, the soul, purged of the bodily things, receives intelligible things, and foresees the future by means of some divine activity.<sup>62</sup>

The explicit reference to Aristotle is possibly an allusion to ideas on divination that were attributed to Aristotle which today are preserved only in scattered

<sup>60</sup> Avicenna’s faculty of imagination is also a corporeal faculty.

<sup>61</sup> Priscian, *Answers to King Khosroes of Persia* (hereafter: “*Answers*”), translated by Pamela Huby, Sten Ebbesen, David Langslow, Donald Russell, Carlos Steel, and Malcolm Wilson (London: Bloomsbury, 2016). See especially chapter 3.

<sup>62</sup> *Answers* (see note 61), 39.



fragments. These lost Aristotelian works<sup>63</sup> are not considered to belong to the scientific body of the written corpus, but rather are viewed as non-scientific or popular writings aimed at a broader audience (e.g., the fragment that is preserved through al-Kindī, above).<sup>64</sup> Now, the evidence from the extant fragments that tradition attributes to Aristotle together with Neoplatonic sources make it likely that the fundamental ideas regarding the superiority of the soul already was present at the time the Arabic adaptation of the *Parva naturalia*.

Already in Synesius and Priscian, then, the building blocks for the system presented in the Arabic *Parva naturalia* are assembled: the deficiency of the external senses; the superiority of the imagination; and the ailments which impede the imagination, which prevent us from perceiving reality in dreams. Synesius and Priscian do not explicitly say that the products of *phantasia* are more “real” than objects of sense in the external world, but they don’t need to: the latter, obtained through fallible intermediaries, are simply more removed from the former.<sup>65</sup> The Neoplatonists do, however, strive to rehabilitate *phantasia*’s status in traditional Aristotelianism as an organ of (potentially deceptive) “appearances.” This rehabilitation reaches its culmination, as we have seen, in the Arabic tradition.

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**63** For a discussion of supposedly early but now lost Aristotelian works, see Werner Jaeger, *Aristotle: Fundamentals of the History of his Development* (1934; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1962). Some of the preserved fragments are assumed to be excerpts from dialogues and it is debated whether these texts express Aristotle’s early views on various matters, e.g. on prophecy or the relation between the body and the soul, or whether such views are discussed for other reasons. At any rate, the views on divination that are expressed in the lost dialogue *Eudemus* (or *On the soul*) of which fragments are preserved by al-Kindī and Cicero (see above) exhibit a strong Platonic character that is difficult to square with Aristotle’s official account of prophecy in *De divinatione*. Regardless whether the alleged Aristotelian texts that express Platonic ideas reflect a view that Aristotle endorsed at some point or not, they are part of an Aristotelian tradition that runs parallel with Aristotle’s official views as stated in the scientific treatises. It should also be noted that there are tensions between “scientific treatises” on the subject of prophecy, e.g., as expressed in the *Eudemean Ethics* (7.14, 1248a24–b6) and the view stated in *De divinatione*. Thus, given the opposing accounts of prophecy in the corpus, a certain confusion about Aristotle’s true views on the subject could be expected.

**64** The translators and commentators of Priscian: *Answers to the King Khosroes of Persia*, Donald Russell, Pamela Huby and Richard Sorabji, stress the incompatibility of Aristotle’s view as expressed in *De divinatione* with Priscian’s assertion that Aristotle perhaps believed that the mind possessed divine powers under special circumstances. However, the relevant Aristotelian fragments are not considered. See *Answers* (see note 61), nn. 169 and 175 (pp. 101 and 103).

**65** Recall al-Kindī’s distinction between that which is “nearer to us but further from nature” and that which is “closer to nature and further from us,” 238, above. In al-Kindī, there is an inversion brought about by his point of view: “nature” for him is the realm of intelligible realities, whereas “we” are mired in the delusions of the mechanisms of the external senses.

## The Truth about Dreams

Released from the demands that plague our waking life, we first seek refuge, as would a newly “dead” soul. Every loss of consciousness is, after all, a death to sensation. The person without bodily concerns is naturally fluent on the astral plane, where many impactful features, objects, experiences, reside. The fluidity of this experience means that she cannot pick out those features, objects, experiences which come from her: she is blinded by omniscience in this realm. The untrained imagination strives to see each thing in turn, ascribing to each object a *rasm* (al-Fārābī’s “impression”; or, in al-Kindī, a symbol [*ramz*]) from its repertoire.

Historians of culture and literature have all come across dream-narrations in pre-modern (if not also in modern) sources. The scientific response, informed by extensive experience, is to treat such events as literary motifs, even where they seem to play an important role in the unfolding of historical narrative; they are reduced to the cultural tics akin to honorifics, or the invocation of gods no longer in vogue.<sup>66</sup> Here we have attempted to show the robust epistemological structure undergirding what might have at first seemed surprising: the recurring positive attitude among medieval Arabic philosophers otherwise unmoved by mysticism toward the veridicality of dreams. Although the Arabic *Parva naturalia* may stand out as a “smoking gun” behind this attitude, it is only one instance of a tendency pervading Graeco-Arabic thought in the guise of Aristotelianism. The Platonic, Neoplatonic, and even Aristotelian reception of Aristotle’s dismissal of dreaming as a mode of truth-recognition all contributed to this glacial but inevitable transformation. When it comes to dreams, we have a 1500-year philosophical tradition building up to Averroes’s analysis – and it is a tradition that can answer the questions we raised in the introduction to this paper: in sum, the cognizable content of dreams is real, but we are probably too dumb to understand it.

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<sup>66</sup> For example, in his exemplary study of the medieval historian al-Ṭabarī’s use of dream-narrations, Johan Weststeijn remarks that “such dreams were *obviously made up* [my emphasis] and therefore are unambiguous examples of creative invention by historians, either by al-Ṭabarī or by his informants” (“Tyrant Dreamers Face Abrahamite Interpreters: A Recurring Motif in al-Ṭabarī’s *History*,” *ʿAbbāsīd Studies IV: Occasional Papers of the School of ʿAbbāsīd Studies*, ed. Monique Bernards [Exeter: Gibb Memorial Trust, 2013], 98–129; here 98–99).

Chiara Benati

# Imaginary Creatures Causing Real Diseases: Projective Etiology in Medieval and Early Modern Medicine

When thinking of the role of imagination in medicine, the most automatic association that comes to a modern mind is probably with Molière's *Malade imaginaire* (1673) and with its hypochondriac protagonist. Moreover, many people would probably connect imagination to the so-called "placebo effect" and the therapeutic power of the mind allowing otherwise unexpected and unexplainable healings.<sup>1</sup> Relating imagination to the branch of medical knowledge concerning the origin of pathologies is less common, since today most diseases have well-known causes or can, in some ways, be scientifically related to environmental factors or genetic disposition. However, this is a fairly recent development and – in a historical perspective – the emergence of diseases was very often explained in highly imaginative terms.

Medieval and early modern people did not know as much as we do about medical etiology, so, for example, they were not aware of the existence of microscopic, invisible entities such as germs causing contagion and transmitting diseases. For this reason, when the explanations provided by the theories of Hippocrates and Galen – still extremely influential at the time – were not considered satisfactory or when a condition was not simply labeled as divine punishment, other, more imaginative, explanations for the onset of a given pathology or of its symptoms were found. In doing this, the responsibility for real diseases and symptoms was often projected onto imaginary demonic creatures, such as worms and elves attacking someone's body or organ from outside, entering it, shooting infectious arrows, or transmitting contagion through their breath.<sup>2</sup>

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1 Albrecht Classen, "Einleitung," *Religion und Gesundheit in der Frühen Neuzeit: Der heilkundliche Diskurs im 16. Jahrhundert*, ed. Albrecht Classen. Theophrastus Paracelsus Studien, 3 (Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2011), 1–52.

2 On this, see also Monika Schulz, *Beschwörungen im Mittelalter. Einführung und Überblick* (Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag C. Winter, 2003), 34–35; M. Höfler, "Krankheits-Dämonen," *Archiv für Religionswissenschaft* 2 (1899): 86–164; here 98, and Audrey L. Meaney, "The Anglo-Saxon View of the Causes of Illness," *Health, Disease and Healing in Medieval Culture*, ed. Sheila Campbell, Bert Hall and David Klausner (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1992), 12–33; here 14.

In this study, these imaginative projective etiologies,<sup>3</sup> their origin and survival in popular belief will be taken into consideration on the basis of a corpus of both medical and magical German texts from the Middle Ages and early modern age,<sup>4</sup> paying particular attention to the way in which people elaborated on them, e.g., classifying worms according to color and size, or claiming of having seen them move.

## Caries and Tooth-Worms

Among the conditions traditionally explained with the presence of demonic worms, the most common is probably tooth decay. The idea that toothache and dental disease result from the presence of one or more worms eating the teeth from inside is extremely old<sup>5</sup> and well-represented in medieval and early

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**3** In this context, only those pathologies which were ascribed to the real presence of one of these demonic creatures in the patient's body will be taken into consideration, whereas metaphorical denominations of pathologies, such as *krebs* "cancer" or *wolf* "dermatological condition, quickly expanding rash" will not. These are, in fact, determined by the alleged similarity between the shape of a lesion or the symptoms of a disease and a known animal and are strongly rooted in Indoeuropean cultures and languages without, however, implying the real presence of this animal inside the patient's body or connecting the insurgence of a pathology to the contact with the homonymous creature. That is, causal connections between cancer and crabs or between quickly expanding rashes and wolves have never been established in medical sources, medieval or modern. On metaphors in medical terminology, see also Susanne Richter, *Metaphorische Gedankenstrukturen in der Entstehung der medizinischen Fachsprache in Europa: Eine historisch-linguistische Analyse der medizinischen Terminogenese von ihren indoeuropäischen Wurzeln bis zur frühen griechischen Antike* (Hamburg: Verlag Dr. Kovač, 2009).

**4** For the purpose of this study, it is not relevant to distinguish between purely medical and magical sources, since – despite their different approaches and methods – they both aim at healing the patient, possibly integrating each other, and can provide important details on how medieval and early modern people fancied the appearance and behavior of these imaginary pathogenic agents. On healing charms as neuropsychosomatic aids in a holistic therapeutic practice, see Wolfgang Ernst, *Beschwörungen und Segen. Angewandte Psychotherapie im Mittelalter* (Cologne, Weimar, and Vienna: Böhlau, 2011). See now the contributions to *Magic and Magicians in the Middle Ages and the Early Modern Time: The Occult in Pre-Modern Sciences, Medicine, Literature, Religion, and Astrology*, ed. Albrecht Classen. *Fundamentals of Medieval and Early Modern Culture*, 20 (Berlin and Boston: Walter de Gruyter, 2017).

**5** A detailed survey on tooth-worms in history is provided by B. R. Townend, "The Story of the Tooth-Worm," *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 15 (1944): 37–58. See also Werner E. Gerabek, "The Tooth-Worm: Historical Aspects of a Popular Medical Belief," *Clinical Oral Investigations* 3 (1999): 1–6, and Astrid Hubmann, "Der Zahnwurm: Die Geschichte eines volksheilkundlichen Glaubens," Ph.D. diss., University of Regensburg, 2008.

modern medicine.<sup>6</sup> This belief is also reflected on a linguistic level: the compound *zanewurm*, “tooth-worm,” is attested in the German language from the ninth century onward,<sup>7</sup> whereas in early modern English the simplex *worm* can be used to refer to the “toothache.”<sup>8</sup>

Prescriptions<sup>9</sup> and blessings<sup>10</sup> against tooth-worms can therefore be found in almost all medieval and early modern medical collections. Most of these

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6 The first to reject the worm theory and to explain the insurgence of caries in a scientific way was the French Pierre Fauchard in his work *Le Chirurgien Dentiste* of 1728. From that moment onward, the tooth-worm theory was relegated to superstition. H. Kobusch, “Der Zahnwurmglaupe in der deutschen Volksmedizin der letzten zwei Jahrhunderte,” Ph.D. diss., University of Frankfurt a. M., 1955, 11. See also Elfriede Grabner, “Der ‘Wurm’ als Krankheitsvorstellung. Süddeutsche und Südosteuropäische Beiträge zur Allgemeinen Volksmedizin,” *Zeitschrift für deutsche Philologie* 81 (1962): 224–40; here 232.

7 See also *Die althochdeutschen Glossen III*, ed. Emil Elias Steinmeyer and Eduard Sievers (Berlin: Weidmannsche Buchhandlung, 1895), 503; *Die althochdeutschen Glossen IV*, ed. Emil Elias Steinmeyer and Eduard Sievers (Berlin: Weidmannsche Buchhandlung, 1898), 367, and Jörg Riecke, *Die Frühgeschichte der mittelalterlichen medizinischen Fachsprache im Deutschen*. Vol. 2: *Wörterbuch* (Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2004), 532.

8 On this, see “worm, n.,” *OED Online* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, December 2018), [www.oed.com/view/Entry/230283](http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/230283) (last accessed on March 4, 2019).

9 See, for example, the Old English *Leechbook* in London, British Library, MS 12 D XVII, fol. 19a (ninth century): “Wiþ toþ wærce gif wyrm ete · genim eald hollen leaf and heort erop neoþe-weardne and saluan ufeweardne bewyl twy dæl in wætre geot on bollan and geona ymb wonne feallad þa wyrmas on þone bollan. Gif wyrm ete þa teoð genim ofen gear eald hollen rinde and efor þrotan moran wel on swa hatum hafa on muþe swa hat swa þu hatost mæge. Wiþ toð wyrnum genim ac mela and beolonan sæd and weax ealra em fela meng tosomne wyne to weax candellice and bærn læt reocan on þone muð do blæc hrægl under þonne feallap þa wyrmas on” (“For tooth wark, if a worm eat the tooth, take an old holly leaf and one of the lower umbels of hartwort, and the upward part of sage, boil two doles in water, pour into a bowl and yawn over it, then the worms shall fall into the bowl. If a worm eat the tooth, take holly rind over a year old, and root of carline thistle, boil in so hot water? [sic] hold in the mouth as hot as thou hottest may. For tooth worms, take acorn meal and henbane seed and wax, of all equally much, mingle these together, work into a wax candle, and burn it, let it reek into the mouth, put a black cloth under, then the worms fall on it”). *Leechdoms, Ordunning and Starcraft of Early England. Being a Collection of Documents, for the Most Part Never before Printed, Illustrating the History of Science in This Country before the Norman Conquest*. Vol. 2, ed. Rev. Oswald Cockayne (London: Longman, Green, Longman, Roberts, and Green, 1865), 50–51.

10 See, for example, the blessing on fol. 118r of a fifteenth-century manuscript from Castle Wolfsturn in Tirol: “Czu den czenden. Sant peter sas auf einem stain vnd hub sein wange in der hant. Do chom vnser herre vnd sprach czu ym: Peter was hastu? Da sprach sant Peter: Herre, die würm haben mir die czende durchgraben. Da sprach der herre: Ich beswer euch czende pey dem vater vnd pey dem sun vnd pey dem heiligen geist, daz ez hinfür chainen gewalt mer habt, Petro sein czenden cze graben. Ayos, ayos, ayos, tetragramaton.” (For the teeth. Saint Peter sat on a stone and held his cheek in the hand. There came our Lord and said

texts are short and simply take for granted the connection between toothache and the presence of some sort of worm eating the patient's teeth from the inside. In some cases, however, further details about these worms are added. In the blessing in Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Cod. 2817, fol. 28v (fourteenth century), for example, their name is mentioned:

Ob die wûrm in den zenen sîen, sô schrîb.

In nomine patris et filii et spiritus sancti, domini nostri Jesu Christi, amen.

Sanctus Petrus ambas manus ad maxillas tenebat:

Supervenibat Christus dominus noster, dicens

'Quid habes, Petre?'

'Domine, vermes habeo, qui nomen habent nigranei, qui deuorant dentes meos et maxillas meas. Signum tuum, domine, super famulum tuum, domine! ayos, ayos, ayos, sanctus, sanctus, sanctus, alleluia, alleluia, alleluia.'

Und segen dich dâmit zwên morgen und ainen aubent und sprich als dick driu paternoster und driu ave Maria, sô wirt dir bas.<sup>11</sup>

[If there are worms in the teeth, then write: In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, and of our Lord Jesus Christ, amen. Saint Peter held both hands on the cheek, Christ our Lord came and said: 'What is wrong with you, Peter?' 'Lord, I have the worms called *nigranei*. They are devouring my teeth and my cheeks. Your sign, Lord, on your servant! ayos, ayos, ayos, sanctus, sanctus, sanctus, alleluia, alleluia, alleluia.' And bless you with this two mornings and one evening and recite, with the same frequency, three Pater noster and three Ave Maria, you will feel better.]

The name *nigranei* is most likely a corruption of Latin *migranei* or *hemigranei*, "of migraine, causing migraine,"<sup>12</sup> a term which is glossed into German as *zanwurm*.<sup>13</sup> This connection between tooth- and headache is witnessed in a fourteenth-century

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to him: 'Peter, what is wrong with you?' Saint Peter answered: 'Lord, the worms have dug a hole in my teeth.' And the Lord said: 'I enchant you, teeth, in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, that there will be no power to dig into Peter's teeth. Ayos, ayos, ayos, tetragrammaton.') Oswald von Zingerle, "Segen und Heilmittel aus einer Wolfsturner Handschrift des 15. Jahrhunderts," *Zeitschrift des Vereins für Volkskunde* 1 (1891): 172–72 and 315–24; here 175. See also Schulz, *Beschwörungen im Mittelalter* (see note 2), 57 and Verena Holzmann, "Ich beswer dich wurm vnd wyrmin ..." *Formen und Typen altd deutscher Zaubersprüche und Segen*. Wiener Arbeiten zur germanischen Altertumskunde und Philologie, 36 (Bern, Berlin, et al.: Peter Lang, 2001), 215–16.

<sup>11</sup> *Denkmäler deutscher Poesie und Prosa aus dem VIII–XII Jahrhundert*, Vol. 2: *Anmerkungen*, ed. Karl Müllenhoff and Wilhelm Scherer (Berlin: Weidmannsche Buchhandlung, 1892), 281.

<sup>12</sup> See also Holzmann, "Ich beswer dich" (see note 10), 215; *Glossarium latino-germanicum mediae et infimae aetatis e codicibus manuscriptorum et libris impressis*, ed. Lorenz Diefenbach (Frankfurt a. M.: Sumptibus Josephi Baer Bibliopolae, 1857), 200.

<sup>13</sup> On this, see also Riecke, *Die Frühgeschichte* (see note 7), 532.

Italian-Latin blessing preserved in Rome, Biblioteca dell'Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei, which can be used to treat both conditions.<sup>14</sup> As in the Vienna blessing, a name for the gnawing worm – *gutta emigranea* “migraine drop” – is provided here.

Other texts provide some kind of description for tooth-worms. This can be established by way of a comparison with really existing creatures, such as an eel<sup>15</sup> or a maggot,<sup>16</sup> or by the reference to some peculiarity of their appearance. In the German folkloric tradition, the color of tooth-worms is often mentioned: they can be red, blue, and gray.<sup>17</sup> The association of different colors to worms

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14 Reinhold Köhler, “Ein Segen gegen Zahnschmerzen,” *Germania: Vierteljahrsschrift für deutsche Alterthumskunde* 13 (1868): 178–88; here 178–79: “Brieve al male de’ denti e a migrana, cioè duolo di testa; il qual brieve si vuole portare in capo o addosso iscritto a riverenza di Jesus Cristo: Iesus docebat discipulos suos et ibi sedebat Iacobus major, Bartolomeus, Taddeus, Matteus, Barnabas, Iohannes, Iacobus minor, Petrus, Simon, Tommas, Philippus, Lucas, Marcus, Matteus, Iohannes evangelista, et Petrus, qui sedebat super petram marmoream, tenebat manum suam a caput suum e cepit contristari. Dissit Iesus: Petre, quare tristis es? Respondit ei Petrus e dixiti: Quia vetus vermen, qui vocatur gucta emigranea, devorat dentes meos. Responditi ei Iesus: Aiuro te de vermene per nomen domini nostri Jesu Christi, ut recedat ab te † et ab omni homine [et] non conrodat: et qui super se portaverit hoc scrittum, ab omni dolore dentium liberetur, et sic digneris per hunc famulum tuum. Amen, amen. † Agios, agios, agios. †” (Short note on toothache and migraine, which is headache. This short note can be worn in written form paying respect to Jesus Christ: Jesus taught his disciples. There sat Jacob the elder, Bartholomew, Thaddeus, Matthew, Barnabas, John, Jakob the younger, Peter, Simon, Thomas, Philip, Luke, Mark, Matthew, John the Evangelist and Peter, who sat on a marble stone, held his hand on the head and was sad. Jesus said: ‘Peter, why are you sad?’ Peter answered: ‘Because an old worm, which is called *gutta emigranea*, is devouring my teeth.’ Jesus replied: ‘I enchant you in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ: may the worms go away from you † and from any other man and may they not cause damage.’ And whoever wears this short note will be free from toothache, do this for this servant of yours. Amen, amen. † Agios, agios, agios. †).

15 T. F. Thiselton Dyer, *English Folk-lore* (London: Hardwicke and Bogue, 1878), 155.

16 See also M. Höfler, *Deutsches Krankheitsnamen-Buch* (Munich: Verlag von Piloty & Loehle, 1899), 834.

17 See, for example, *Norddeutsche Sagen, Märchen und Gebräuche aus Meklenburg, Pommern, der Mark, Sachsen, Thüringen, Braunschweig, Hannover, Oldenburg und Westfalen*, ed. A. Kuhn and W. Schwartz (Leipzig: F. A. Brockhaus, 1848), 441: “Wenn man Zahnschmerzen hat, muß man hingehen und einen Baum anklagen, am besten einen Birnbaum. Das geschieht, indem man denselben anfaßt, ihn dreimal rechts umwandelt und sagt: Birnbaum, ich klage dir, Drei Würmer, die stechen mir, der eine ist grau, der andere ist blau, der dritte ist roth, ich wollte wünschen, sie wären alle drei todt” (When one has toothache, one must go to a tree, possibly a pear tree, and blame it. This happens when one touches it, moves around it three times rightward and says: Pear tree, I blame you: three worms are in me, one is gray, one is blue and the third is red, I wish they were all dead). See also R. Riegler, “Wurm,” *Handwörterbuch des deutschen Aberglaubens*. Vol. 9: *Waage – Zypresse, Nachträge [A-Z]*, ed. Hanns Bächtold-Stäubli and Eduard Hoffmann-Krayer (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1941), col. 849.

most likely originates from magic and, in particular, from the conception, according to which one needed to know the names of those willing to damage him/her, in order to be able to defeat them. In this case, the opponents are represented by the demonic worms causing diseases, and their names are replaced by their typologies. Trying to differentiate them, distinguishing various species by color, age, gender,<sup>18</sup> studying the behavior and *modus operandi*,<sup>19</sup> and organs they affected is a way to be as comprehensive and specific as possible in identifying these harmful creatures in order to enhance the chances of defeating them through magic.<sup>20</sup> The original magic motivation of this meticulous differentiation of worms must have gone lost at some point, but some of the traits attributed to them in this context must have remained stable in popular imagination as distinctive features of these parasites, thus becoming part of their ideal representation.

This all-encompassing attitude of magical texts toward worms is witnessed in many medieval and early modern formulas, such as, for example, in the Low German (tooth-)worm blessing transmitted in Stockholm, Royal Library, Cod. X 113, fol. 26r (fifteenth century):

Eyne worm segenynghe der tene vnde des gantzen lychames bynnen vnde buten vnde begynnet aldus.

In den namen des vaders vnde des soenes vnde des hilligen geistes. Der worme weren mannich, dey den gueden sunte Jop aten syn vleisch vnde syn bloet druncken. Somyge weren wit, somyge weren swart vnse somige weren roit. Desse worme syn alle doit. Sunte Jop lach yn dem lesten vnde riep dem hilligen Crist vnde sprach:

Du vil leyue hillige Crist,  
wynte du dair in deme hemel bist,  
so bidde ich dich dorch dyne guete  
dat ich dessem menschen des wormes boeten moete  
dorch dyner namen werdicheyt  
vnde dorch dey pyne, dey sunte Jop leit  
eir hey starff. Nu vntbeide ich yw allen gy woirme,  
dat gy jotuens steruen  
vnde hir nummer nicht weruen.

<sup>18</sup> See, for example, St. Gall, Stiftsbibliothek, Cod. 755, p. 167 (fifteenth century): “Du wurm du würme ich beschwere dich du seÿest jung oder alt bös oder gutt klein oder groß ... du seÿest gel grün blaw schwarz oder wellen farben du seÿest ...” (You worm and you female worm, I enchant you young and old, bad and good, small or big ... yellow, blue, black or whatever colour you are ...).

<sup>19</sup> See, for example, the “riding worm” (German *reitender wurm*) in Heidelberg, Universitätsbibliothek, Cpg 255, fol. 73r (sixteenth century), the “riding,” “flying” (German *fliegend*), “shooting” (German *schliessend*) and “malignant” (German *freissam*) worms in Heidelberg, Universitätsbibliothek, Cpg. 369, fol. 262r (fifteenth century).

<sup>20</sup> On this, see also Schulz, *Beschwörungen im Mittelalter* (see note 2), 60–61.



It sy + dey witte worm + dey brune worm + dey vale worm + dey madeworm + dey tane worm + dey nase worm + dey drupende worm + dey haer worm + dey hunt worm + dey breyde worm + dey honich worm + dey schaeff worm + dey ang worm + dey slang worm. Dey bittericheit dusser worme vnde aller hande worme den sy dat vleisch dussis menschen leit to ettende vnde syn beyn to brekende vnde ouch syn bloit to drynckende, als vnser leyuen vrouwen sunte Marien dat leit was, dat sey er benedide kynt Ihesum an dem vronen cruce by er doit hangen sach.

Ich beswere yw worme alle

by deme vngevalle

vnde beswere yw by deme benediden bloide,

dat vnsen vil leyuen herrn vit synen benediden lyue vloet,

dat gy worme alle jetoen keysen den doit

vnde snelliken steruen

vnde hir nummer nicht weruen.

Des helpe vns Got vnde dey guede sunte Jop.

Ich beswere yw worme alle

by dem vader + by deme soene vnde by dem hilligen geiste ... Amen.<sup>21</sup>

[A blessing for the worms of the teeth and of the whole body, both inside and outside, which begins in this way: In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. There were many worms, which ate Saint Job's flesh and drank his blood. Some were white, some were black and some were red. These worms are all dead. Saint Job lay among the last ones, he invoked the holy Christ and said: 'Dear holy Christ, as long as you are there in heaven, I pray you for the sake of your goodness: may I heal this man from the worms by the majesty of Your name and by the pain suffered by Saint Job before he died. Now I command all of you, worms, to die immediately and never be active here. That is + the white worm + the brown worm + the yellow worm + the pinworm<sup>22</sup> + the tooth-worm + the nose worm + the dripping (?)<sup>23</sup> worm + the hair worm + the tapeworm of the dog<sup>24</sup> + the wide worm<sup>25</sup> + the honey worm + the tapeworm of the sheep<sup>26</sup> + the *ang worm*<sup>27</sup> + any other vermin.<sup>28</sup> The bitterness of these and all other worms is due to the fact that they cause pain

<sup>21</sup> Agi Lindgren, *Ein Stockholmer mittelniederdeutsches Arzneibuch aus der zweiten Hälfte des 15. Jahrhunderts*. Acta universitatis stockholmiensis. Stockholmer germanistische Forschungen, 5 (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1967), 117–19.

<sup>22</sup> See also Lindgren, *Ein Stockholmer mittelniederdeutsches Arzneibuch* (see note 21), 197, and Höfler, *Deutsches Krankheitsnamen-Buch* (see note 16), 830.

<sup>23</sup> See also Lindgren, *Ein Stockholmer mittelniederdeutsches Arzneibuch* (see note 21), 175.

<sup>24</sup> See also Lindgren, *Ein Stockholmer mittelniederdeutsches Arzneibuch* (see note 21), 189; Höfler, *Deutsches Krankheitsnamen-Buch* (see note 16), 828, and Henry Stewart, *The Domestic Sheep: Its Culture and General Management* (Chicago: American Sheep Breeder Press, 1900), 374.

<sup>25</sup> See also Lindgren, *Ein Stockholmer mittelniederdeutsches Arzneibuch* (see note 21), 171.

<sup>26</sup> See also Lindgren, *Ein Stockholmer mittelniederdeutsches* (see note 21), 207, and Höfler, *Deutsches Krankheitsnamen-Buch* (see note 16), 832.

<sup>27</sup> See also Lindgren, *Ein Stockholmer mittelniederdeutsches Arzneibuch* (see note 21), 165.

<sup>28</sup> See also Lindgren, *Ein Stockholmer mittelniederdeutsches Arzneibuch* (see note 21), 210, and Höfler, *Deutsches Krankheitsnamen-Buch* (see note 16), 578.

to this man eating his flesh, breaking his bones, and drinking his blood as the very sight of her own holy son Jesus hanging from the cross caused pain to our dear Lady Saint Mary. I enchant you all, worms, by the disgrace and by the holy blood which gushed out from the body of our dear Lord: may you all, worms, choose the death, die quickly, and never be active here! May God and the good Saint Job help us in this. I enchant you, worms, in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit ... Amen.]

In this case, the colors attributed to worms are white, black, and red, but also brown and yellow. The first three are introduced in a short narrative elaborating on the biblical passage in Job 7: 5 “My flesh is clothed with worms and a crust of dirt, My skin hardens and runs.”<sup>29</sup> at the beginning of the blessing, whereas the second two appear – along with white – in the catalogue of parasites ideally affected by the power of the formula. Given this context, none of these colors can be specifically attributed to tooth-worms (or to any other kind of vermin), but, since the only color associated to caries in the German folkloric tradition, which is also mentioned in the Low German text, is red, one could possibly consider the red worms plaguing “Saint” Job as those causing him toothache.

Apart from elaborating more or less detailed descriptions of tooth-worms, in medical sources imagination is also displayed in the account of alleged diagnostically relevant observations of their behavior. The Flemish surgeon Jan Yperman († ca. 1330), for example, explains that worm-related tooth abscesses are only present when worms are moving.<sup>30</sup>

Moving from diagnosis to therapy, a good amount of imagination is also to be found in the efficacy statements regarding fumigation<sup>31</sup> and other remedies

<sup>29</sup> On the recourse to Job in worm blessings, see also Schulz, *Beschwörungen im Mittelalter* (see note 2), 44–50.

<sup>30</sup> De “Cyrurgie” van Meester Jan Yperman. *Naar de Handschriften van Brussel, Cambridge, Gent en Londen*, ed. E. C. van Leersum (Leiden: A. W. Sijthoff’s Uitg.-Mij, 1912), 113: “Het gevalt menechwerf dat tanden siin gegaet. dewelke reume sendet die vertege humoren diere gaten in maken. Ende onderwilen doent worme diere in wassen. dewelke gi moget kennen. want alse die worme stille liggen. dan so en sweren die tanden niet. Mer alsi roeren so swerense” (It happens often that there are cavities in the teeth. These are caused by rheumatisms, cold humors drill holes into them, and facilitate the development of worms inside. Be aware that there is no tooth abscess if the worms do not move; if, on the other hand, there is an abscess, this means that the worms are moving).

<sup>31</sup> On this, see Gerabek, “The Tooth-Worm” (see note 5), 3. See, for example, Helny Alstermark, *Das Arzneibuch des Johan van Segen* (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell International, 1977), 110: “Weder den worm jn den ten. Wer den worm jn den zen hait, der nem bilsenolij vnd was; vnd mach eyn kyrcz darvit vnd bern de vnd do se weder vit vnd las den rauch jn den munt gain, so sterwent se vnd fallent af” (Against the worms in the teeth. Those who have worms in the teeth should take bane-oil and wax, make a candle out of them, burn it, blow it out again, and let the smoke go into the mouth. In this way, they die and fall out).

against caries, which are supposed to make worms drop dead inside the patient's mouth or into a bowl of water, as described in the thirteenth-century Munich *Bartholomäus*<sup>32</sup> fragment in Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Cgm. 92, fol. 7c:

Swem wurme die zende holnt unde die bilare ezent, nime bilsenole und bere daz mit wahse unde mach eine cherzen unde stecke die in eine schuzel, dā ein luzel wazers inne si: sō diu cherze enbrinne, sō habe die zende dar uber, sō vallent die wurme alle in daz wazer.<sup>33</sup>

[When the worms drill holes in the teeth and inflamate the gums, then take bane-oil, burn it with wax to form a candle. Place it in a bowl with a little water in it: while the candle burns, keep the teeth on it, in this way all the worms will fall into the water.]

This reference to worms dropping dead into the bowl of water is – from a purely logical point of view – not unproblematic. While, in fact, the identification of tooth-worms as responsible for tooth decay is a product of imagination possibly triggered by the observation of the dental pulpa hanging down from bad teeth once they have been extracted<sup>34</sup> and certainly requiring an attentive inspection of the patient's oral cavity being exposed as such, singling out inexistent dead worms in a clear liquid is an entirely different matter, unless tooth-worms were postulated to be invisible. The latter does not seem to be the case since none of the sources hints at the fact that tooth-worms were invisible or too small to be seen, as we would say today, by the naked eye. A further witness of this is provided by Karl Bartsch in his collection of popular tales, traditions, and superstitions from Mecklenburg, where he explicitly – and not without some incredulity – cites the possibility of seeing the parasites lying in water.<sup>35</sup>

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32 See also Gundolf Keil, "Bartholomäus Salernitanus," *Die deutsche Literatur des Mittelalters. Verfasserlexikon*. Vol. 1: 'A solis ortus cardine' – Colmarer Dominikanerchronist, ed. Kurt Ruh et al. (Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1978), col. 623–25, and Gundolf Keil, "Bartholomäus Salernitanus," *Enzyklopädie Medizingeschichte*, ed. Werner E. Gerabek, Bernhard D. Haage, Gundolf Keil, and Wolfgang Werner (Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2005), 150.

33 Franz Pfeiffer, *Zwei deutsche Arzneibücher aus dem XII. und XIII. Jahrhundert mit einem Wörterbuche*. Sitzungsberichte der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, philologisch-historische Classe (Vienna: Karl Gerold's Sohn, Buchhändler der Kais. Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1863), 32–33.

34 Riegler, "Wurm" (see note 17), col. 849. See also Gottfried Lammert, *Volksmedizin und medizinischer Aberglaube in Bayern und den angrenzenden Bezirken begründet auf die Geschichte der Medizin und Cultur* (Würzburg: Verlag von F.A. Julien, 1869), 130.

35 Karl Bartsch, *Sagen, Märchen und Gebräuche aus Meklenburg*. Vol. 2: *Gebräuche und Aberglaube* (Vienna: Wilhelm Braumüller, 1880), 122: "Die Meinung, daß der Zahnschmerz durch an der Zahnwurzel fressende Würmer verursacht werde, ist noch allgemein. Der Kranke

If tooth-worms were, indeed, thought to exist and to be visible, why would one guarantee the effectiveness of a remedy having recourse to an inexistent visual evidence? It would have been not only completely nonsensical, but also self-defeating. For this reason, this discursive strategy can only be explained on the basis of the observation of something (e.g., fragments of enamel from the sick tooth, small clots of saliva or blood), which had fallen into the water container and could be interpreted as worms. This might also possibly justify at least part of the variety of colors ascribed to tooth-worms, since saliva is white and fragments of enamel could, according to their condition, be described as white, yellow, or brownish, blood clots as red or brown/black.

## Dermatological Conditions and “Hair Worms”

Apart from tooth-worms, another category of parasites is usually distinguished in medieval and early modern German medical compendia: the so-called “hair worms” (German *Haarwürmer*),<sup>36</sup> which are considered to be responsible for a series of dermatological diseases usually resulting in a festering rash developing from the scalp (or the beard), also known under the metaphorical name of *wolf*.<sup>37</sup>

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hält deshalb einen Löffel mit siedendem Wasser unter den schmerzenden Zahn in den Mund und läßt die Dämpfe hineinziehen. Dadurch werden die Würmer betäubt, lassen den Zahn los und fallen in den Löffel, so daß man sie ‘deutlich im Wasser liegen sehen kann’” (The opinion according to which toothache is caused by worms gnawing the tooth root is still common. For this reason, the sick puts a spoon with boiling water into the mouth, under the aching tooth, letting the vapors penetrate into it. In this way the worms are numbed, release the tooth, and fall into the spoon, so that one can clearly see them lying in the water).

**36** The German compound *Haarwurm* can be read as both descriptive (Sanskrit *Karamadharaya*), i.e., “a worm thin as a hair (*acarus vegetans*, *gordius aquaticus* or *tricocephalus*)”, and determinative (Sanskrit *Tatpuruṣa*), i.e., “a worm of / in the hair”, as described in Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm, *Deutsches Wörterbuch*. Vol. 4.2: *H – Juzen* (Leipzig: Verlag von S. Hirzel, 1877), col. 40, and in Höfler, *Krankheitsnamen-Buch* (see note 16), 826–27, whereas the English term *hairworm* is only used in the sense of “aquatic, nematomorph worm of the order Gordioidea, which, in its larval stages, is a parasite of insects, worms, or fishes”. See “hairworm, n.,” *OED Online* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, March 2019), <http://www.oed.com.001271e70677.emedia1.bsb-muenchen.de/view/Entry/83337?redirectedFrom=hair+worm&> (last accessed on March 29, 2019). In all occurrences taken into consideration in this study, the German compound has the meaning of “worm of the hair, devouring the hair”.

**37** On this, see also Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm, *Deutsches Wörterbuch*. Vol. 14.2: *Wilb – Ysop* (Leipzig: Verlag von S. Hirzel, 1960), col. 1249–50. The association of hair worms with the metaphorical name *wolf* can also be found in a fifteenth-century worm blessing preserved in Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Cod. 2849, fol. 85r: “In den namen + des vater + vnd des suns

As many prescriptions in the sources clearly show, the emergence of these dermatological conditions was ascribed to the presence of worms devouring the hair (root) and the skin. See, for example, the therapeutic indication at the beginning of the corresponding passages in the early fifteenth-century Middle Low German collection known as *Düdesche Arstедie* (Gotha, Forschungsbibliothek, Cod. Chart. A 980):

Wedder de worme de dat haer ethen / nym cypollen vnde stot de vnde wringk dat sap vth / vnde steck dar de borste ynne vnde borste dar dat haer mede, dat vordrift se myt alle.<sup>38</sup>

[Against the worms which eat the hair. Take an onion, pound it and wring the juice out of it. Then, immerge a brush in it and brush the hair with it. This will drive off all of them.]

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+ vnd des heiligen geistes + amen + In dem vnsers herren iesu cristi nazareni Tott dich wurm dich wolff, seyt ich dich funden han in dem vnd an dem menschen N. har du wurm luppo, swelches geschlachtz du seyst ... ” (In the name of the Father + the Son + and the Holy Spirit, amen. In that of our Lord Jesus Christ the Nazarene, die you worm, you wolf, since I found you in and on the hair of this man N. You, worm *luppo*, of whatever kind you are ... ). Here the Latin noun *lupus* “wolf” is also used as apposition of *wurm* “worm,” possibly to indicate a specific type of worms – hair worms. A Romance parallel to this formula, where the disease is identified with the wolf devouring the patient’s flesh and drinking his blood can be found in a Catalan charm preserved in Perpignan, Archives Départementales des Pyrénées-Orientales, 3 E 1/ 546: “Conjur de lobas. + Nostre Senyor e moss. sent P. se n’aven per lur cami e encontraren lo lop lobas. ‘E on vas, lop lobas?’ se dix Nostre Senyor. ‘Vau a la cassa d’aytal, menjar la carn e beure le sanch d’aytal. – No fasses, lop lobas!’ se dix Nostre Senyor. ‘Ve-t’en per les pastures menjar les herbes menudes, ve-t’en per les montanyes, menjar les herbes salvatges, ve-t’en a mige mar, que aci no puxes res demandar!’ *Et dicatur tribus vicinus*, e el Pater Noster e l’Ave Maria e lo Evangeli de Sant Johan” (Charm against the bad wolf. + Our Lord and Sir Saint Peter were on their way, when they met the bad wolf. ‘Where are you going, wolf, bad wolf?’ our Lord asked. ‘I’m going to that guy’s home to eat his flesh and drink his blood. – Don’t do that, wolf, bad wolf!’ our Lord said. ‘Go to the pastures to eat the small herbs, go to the mountains to eat the wild herbs, go to the middle of the sea because there is nothing here for you!’ *Et dicatur tribus vicinus* and the Lord’s Prayer and the Ave Maria and the Gospel of Saint John). See Marcello Barbato, *Incantamenta latina et romanica. Scongiori e formule magiche die seculi V–XV*. Testi e documenti di letteratura e lingua, XLI (Rome: Salerno Editrice, 2019), 107–08.

**38** *Das Gothaer mittelniederdeutsche Arzneibuch und seine Sippe*, ed. Sven Norrbom. *Mittelniederdeutsche Arzneibücher*, 1 (Hamburg: Hartung, 1921), 82. See also W. L. Wardale, *Albrecht van Borgunnien’s Treatise on medicine (Sloane Ms. 3002, British Museum)*. St. Andrews University Publication, 37 (London, Edinburgh, and Glasgow: Oxford University Press, 1936), 25, and Mareike Temmen, *Das ‘Abdinghofer Arzneibuch’. Edition und Untersuchung einer Handschrift mittelniederdeutscher Fachprosa* (Cologne, Weimar, and Vienna: Böhlau Verlag, 2006), 165: “Item weme de worme dat har etet, de sal nemen ... ” (Those, whose hair is eaten by worms, should take ... ).

The term *harwurm* also appears in a series of charms and blessings, where, as in the above cited fifteenth-century Stockholm manuscript, it is usually inserted in the list of parasites against which the formula is considered effective. An earlier (twelfth-century) High German example is represented by the charm in Graz, Universitätsbibliothek, Ms. 1501, fol. 132v–133r:

Der hêrre Jôb lach in miste,  
 rief ûf ze Christe,  
 mit eiter bewollen:  
 die maden im ûz uielen.  
 des buotze im der hailige Crist.  
 also sî. N. des manewurmes, des hârwurmes, des maguewurmes, des perzeles unde aller  
 der slahte wurme die niezende sîn [od]er verzerende sîn ----- u. ach. N.  
 der wurm der sî nû tôt  
 hiute unde immer mêr.  
 In nomine domini. amen. pater noster. daz scolt dû drîestunden sprechen: vur daz eiter  
 scoltûz sprechen. Carnax alia. carnax edia. immensina. samsodina. cast bistu ir ----- N.  
 --- tw bistu u. zergent sie nv. in nomine scî sp. ----- II ----- III --- <sup>39</sup>

[Sir Job laid in dung, full of pus he invoked Christ: the worms came out from him. The holy Christ healed him. In the same way, may N. be healed from mane worms, hair worms, stomach worms, parasites and all sorts of vermin which gnaw and devour ... N. May the worm be dead now and forever. In the name of the Lord, amen. Pater noster. This should be repeated three times. Against suppuration, you should say: *Carnax alia. carnax edia. immensina. Samsodina*. You are ... N. You are ... and may they be destroyed in the name of the Holy Spirit II ... III ... ]

In this case, the term *harwurm* is preceded by another compound *manewurm* (“mane worm”), which can be considered almost synonym to it.<sup>40</sup>

None of these texts, however, describes this category of parasites any further: differently from tooth worms, we do not find any reference to their color or appearance. For this reason, we do not know how exactly medieval and early modern people imagined these creatures, only that they were held responsible for certain dermatological conditions involving the scalp or developing from it, since they were thought to be naturally residing among the hair.<sup>41</sup> Once the

<sup>39</sup> Anton Schönbach “Zu den Denkmälern,” *Zeitschrift für deutsches Alterthum und deutsche Litteratur* 21 (1877): 413. See also Holzmann, “*Ich beswer dich*” (see note 10), 196, and Eleonora Cianci, *Incantesimi e benedizioni nella letteratura tedesca medievale (IX–XIII sec.)*. Göppinger Arbeiten zur Germanistik, 717 (Göppingen: Kümmerle, 2004), 94–97.

<sup>40</sup> On this, see Matthias Lexer, *Mittelhochdeutsches Handwörterbuch*. Vol.1: A – M (Leipzig: Verlag S. Hirzel, 1872), col. 2029.

<sup>41</sup> See also Höfler, *Krankheitsnamen-Buch* (see note 16), 826.

disease had developed and scabs had appeared, hair worms were thought to be in them, as witnessed by the following passage in Albrecht van Borgunnien's medical compendium (fifteenth century): "Gerstenstro to aschen gebrant dar mede loghe aff vnde wasche den schorff dar harworme inne synt."<sup>42</sup> (Place the ashes of burnt barley straw on the scabs where hair worms are and wash them). Moreover, the development of spot baldness was also attributed to these parasites, which caused them by devouring the hair root.<sup>43</sup>

## Whitlow and Finger Worms

Another pathology originally ascribed to demonic worms is the infection of the finger – or toetip known in English as whitlow (German *Panaritium*).<sup>44</sup> This condition was, in fact, attributed to the so-called "finger worms" (*fingerwurm*, *wurm am finger*) or "unnamed (worms),"<sup>45</sup> which were considered responsible for the persistent throbbing pain associated with it. This idea was probably

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<sup>42</sup> Wardale, *Albrecht van Borgunnien's* (see note 35), 12.

<sup>43</sup> See also Höfler, *Krankheitsnamen-Buch* (see note 16), 826.

<sup>44</sup> The term *Fingerwurm* is still attested in modern German as a popular synonym of *Panaritium*. See Duden, *Wörterbuch medizinischer Fachbegriffe* (Mannheim and Zürich: Dudenverlag, 2012), 293. The equivalence of the two terms is possibly based on glossary entries like the one in the Middle Low German sixteenth-century manuscript Copenhagen, Royal Library, GKS 1663 4<sup>to</sup>, fol. 197v: "pannaricum iß en bose vorgiftich worm. Vnd licht in den vornsten leden also in den vingeren vnd ock in den voteß tonen ..." (*Pannaricum* is an evil, poisonous worm, which lies in the most periferical limbs as in the fingers and in the toes.)

<sup>45</sup> See, for example, the fourteenth-century blessing in Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, clm 4350, fol. 73v: "Fur daz ungenant. Haisse ein wazzer schephen mit trein pater noster in dem namen der trivaltichait und sprich diu wort. Carna. Spodia. Carnans. Sedia. In mesima samsodina. Gast pistu von N. solt tu aiter pistu zergen solt + In nomine sancti Simplicii In nomine sancti Elech in nomine sancte trinitatis. Pater noster usw" (Against the unnamed. Heat up a bowl of water saying three Pater noster in the name of the Trinity and say these words: *Carna. Spodia. Carnans. Sedia. In mesima samsodina*. You are guest of N., you pus should disappear + *In nomine sancti Simplicii In nomine sancti Elech in nomine sancte trinitatis*. Pater noster etc.). Holzmann, "Ich beswer dich" (see note 10), 139; or Heidelberg, Universitätsbibliothek, Cpg. 266, fol. 144v: "Für den vngenanten. Mach salz hais in ein leinen secklen das lege eim vff die schlos do zeucht das wehe der werm noch Er soll auch sere an wermut schmecken Auch und mutterkraut Vnd bibergaile hilfft." (Against the unnamed. Heat some salt in a small linen bag and place it onto the joint. The pain will follow the warmth. He should also drink vermouth, featherfew, and castoreum. It helps). See also Höfler, *Krankheitsnamen-Buch* (see note 16), 441 and Grabner, "Der 'Wurm'" (see note 6), 232–35.

determined by the fact that, when popping the suppurative focus on the finger, the pus contained in it flowed out resembling a worm.<sup>46</sup>

Prescriptions to treat whitlow are extremely frequent in medieval and early modern medical compendia. There is, for example, the case of the long section dedicated to this pathology in the sixteenth-century High German manuscript constituting the eighth volume of Louis V, Count Palatine of the Rhine's *Buch der Medizin* (Heidelberg, Universitätsbibliothek, Cpg. 268, fol. 123r–129r),<sup>47</sup> where the expression *wurm am finger* systematically appears in the titles/therapeutic indications of the single prescriptions, while the simplex *wurm* is used both to indicate the very spot which has to be treated and, in the phrases *der wurm stirbt* (“the worm dies”)<sup>48</sup> or *es dödt die würm* (“it kills the worms”),<sup>49</sup> to describe the expected outcome of the procedure.

Despite the high frequency of passages dealing with this condition in medical and magical sources, these do not provide enough details to reconstruct how exactly medieval and early modern people's imagination depicted them. Given the fact that the very idea of the existence of finger worms was probably based on the image of pus flow after popping, we can assume that they were thought to be white. Furthermore, this image must have determined the idea that they were living in a small hole, possibly coinciding with the one created when pressing on the whitlow. In one of the prescriptions in the Heidelberg manuscript we find, for example, a reference to the “hole, in which the worm is.”<sup>50</sup>

Furthermore, finger worms were also held responsible for whitlow in animals, in particular, horses.<sup>51</sup>

<sup>46</sup> See also Werner Manz, *Volksbrauch und Volksglaube des Sarganserlandes*. Schriften der Schweizerischen Gesellschaft für Volkskunde, 12 (Basel and Strassburg: Karl J. Trübner Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1916), 63–64.

<sup>47</sup> On this, see also Karl Bartsch, *Die altdeutschen Handschriften der Universitäts-Bibliothek in Heidelberg*. Katalog der Handschriften der Universitäts-Bibliothek in Heidelberg, 1 (Heidelberg: Koester, 1887), 53–55.

<sup>48</sup> See, for example, Heidelberg, Universitätsbibliothek, Cpg. 268, fol. 126v: “Für den wurm am finger oder zehen. Dorüber binde ein warmen kue dreck douon stirbt der wurm zuhant daß wisse für ware” (Against the worm on the finger or toe. Bind warm cow turd onto it. The worm dies immediately because of this, be aware of this).

<sup>49</sup> See, for example, Heidelberg, Universitätsbibliothek, Cpg. 268, fol. 124v: “Vor den wurm am finger Oder in den zen. So bren zu bulluer wüthen in dem wasser Vnd sewe es vff den schaden Es dödt die würm” (Against the worm on the finger or toe. Burn hedyotis to powder and [put it] in water. Then pour it onto the lesion. It kills the worms).

<sup>50</sup> Heidelberg, Universitätsbibliothek, Cpg. 268, fol. 126r: “Oder stos es in das loch do der wurm in ist” (Or push it into the hole, in which the worm is).

<sup>51</sup> See, for example, Heidelberg, Universitätsbibliothek, Cpg. 268, fol. 124r: “Vor den lebendigen wurm am finger Auch zu pferden” (Against the alive worm on the finger. Also for horses).



## Heartburn, Heart Water, Death in Childbed, and Heart Worms

In a Munich manuscript of 1601 (Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Cgm 3725, fol. 100r), we find a quite impressive description of the so-called *herzwurm* “heart worm,” a particularly feared parasite, which was considered responsible for a series from conditions such as heartburn, nausea, heart water, which could also lead to the sudden death of the person affected:

Für den Herzwurm. Das ist ein Wurm, der den leuten das herz abpeist und niemand weiß was es ist. der haist der hertzwurm und sterben gähling daran. Er hat 2 hörner an dem haubt vorn wie ein hirsch ...<sup>52</sup>

[For heart worm. This is a worm, which bites off the people’s heart. No-one knows what it is. It is called heart worm and they die immediately as a consequence of it. It has two horns on the front of the head like a stag ... ]

According to this description, heart worms are characterized by a typically demonic feature: a pair of horns in the frontal part of the head. The strongly demonic connotation of this worm, which is further witnessed by the fact that – in Saxon folk belief – it is also called *Teufelwurm* (“devil worm”),<sup>53</sup> is mirrored in its alleged *modus operandi*: biting off a person’s heart and causing his/her death, without any recognizable symptom.

In the Middle Low German recipe collection in Stockholm, Royal Library, Cod. X 113, fol. 13r, heart worms are put in connection with maternity and childbirth, possibly to try to explain delayed and unexpected cases of death in childbed:

Wanner eyne vrouwe entfangen heuet.

Wanner eyne vrouwe entfangen heuet, so pleget gemeynlyken by der vrucht to wassene eyne worm. Dey heuet vlogele also eyne vledermues vnde enen snauel as eyne vogel vnde dey worm wasset op myt der vrucht, vnde wan dey vrowe geberet heuet, altohant ouer cleyne dagen styget op to deme herten der vrowen, vnde dan to lesten so hellet hey der vrowen herte. Also wan men menyt, dat dey vrowe genesen sy, so steruet dey vrowe rokelose, dat men nycht en weyt, wat er schellet. Item wey nv den worm verdriuen wyll vnde doden enne, oppe dat hey dey vrowen so nycht en morde, dey neme dey vrucht, dey oppe deme assche wasset; dey vrucht heyt gemeynlyken kuttenslotel. Dat sal men to puluer drucken vnde wryuen vnde geuen dat der vrowen altohant, wan sey gebert heft, to drinkene. Sey hebbe den worm ofte nycht, allike woll sal men er dat drinken geuen. Heuet

<sup>52</sup> The text is followed by a prescription. See also Johann Andreas Schmeller, *Bayerisches Wörterbuch*. Vol. 1 (Munich: R. Oldenbourg Verlag, 2008), col. 1171, and Grabner, “Der ‘Wurm’” (see note 6), 226, whose transcription is, however, not complete.

<sup>53</sup> Höfler, *Krankheitsnamen-Buch* (see note 16), 833.

sey den worm, so vordriuet en dat kruet, heuet sey enne nycht, so hindert er dey dranck nycht. Item et en is neyne artsedie so guet in der werlde den alse desse vorgeschreuen artsediye.<sup>54</sup>

[When a woman has conceived.

When a woman has conceived, a worm may grow together with the embryo. This has wings like a bat and a beak like a bird. The worm grows together with the embryo and, once the woman has delivered, it quickly goes up to the heart of the woman within a few days and bothers it. In this way, when one thinks that the woman is out of danger, she suddenly dies, without anyone knowing what is wrong with her. Those who want to drive away the worm and kill it, so that it does not kill the woman, should take the fruit, which grows on the ash and which is commonly called “key of the vagina.”<sup>55</sup> This should be pressed and crumbled to powder and given to drink to the woman, once she has delivered. This should be given her to drink, both whether she has the worm or whether she does not have it. If she does have the worm, this will be driven away by the plant, if she does not have it, this drink does not harm. In fact, no remedy in the world is as good as the above described.]

Despite the similarity in the depiction of the parasite’s deceitful deadly behavior, which fundamentally prevents anyone from recognizing it in advance, the description of heart worm in the Low German compendium differs significantly from the above-discussed one in Cgm 3725. Instead of having stag-like horns, in fact, heart worms here have a beak and bat-like wings.

In different ways, the idea of heart worms survived for quite a long time in popular belief and superstition, where they were either believed to be in the shape assumed by witches in order to eat up someone’s heart,<sup>56</sup> or considered to be endemic in human beings, who could not live without them and therefore died in the very moment this vermin crawled out of his/her mouth.<sup>57</sup>

## Various Worms to Chase from Men and Animals

Apart from the above-discussed typologies of worms, which are sometimes dealt with separately in medical and magical sources, imaginary pathogenic worms

<sup>54</sup> Lindgren, *Ein Stockholmer mittelniederdeutsches Arzneibuch* (see note 21), 101–02. See also Jacob Grimm, *Deutsche Mythologie*. Vol. 3: *Nachträge und Anhang* (Berlin: Ferd. Dümmlers Verlagsbuchhandlung Harwitz und Gossmann, 1878), 341 and Riegler, “Wurm” (see note 17), col. 847.

<sup>55</sup> See also Lindgren, *Ein Stockholmer mittelniederdeutsches Arzneibuch* (see note 21), 194.

<sup>56</sup> See also Höfler, *Krankheitsnamen-Buch* (see note 16), 828 and Riegler, “Wurm” (see note 17), col. 847.

<sup>57</sup> See also Riegler, “Wurm” (see note 17), col. 847.

are often grouped together with really existing parasites, e.g., tapeworm in sources aiming at chasing (or killing) them all out and not simply a specific one.<sup>58</sup>

This approach is often to be found in magical formulas, as it is already witnessed in the oldest German worm charm, the ninth-century exorcism *Pro Nessia*<sup>59</sup> (Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Clm 18524b, fol. 203v), in which the worm (*Nessia/Nesso*) is asked to leave the affected horse<sup>60</sup> in various steps:<sup>61</sup> from the marrow in the veins, from the veins into the flesh, from the flesh in the skin and from the skin onto the hoof sole.<sup>62</sup>

As we have seen, in many of these formulas we find a detailed catalog of different species of worms aimed at precisely identifying them in order to better defeat them. In these cases, we can assume that the same charm or blessing was considered effective against all the typologies of parasites mentioned. In some cases, this all-embracing aim is made explicit in the text itself. See, for example, Heidelberg, Universitätsbibliothek, Cpg. 266, fol. 144r (1526–1544): “Für den

**58** See also Meaney, “The Anglo-Saxon View” (see note 2), 15.

**59** See also Hans-Hugo Steinhoff, “‘Pro nessia’ / ‘Contra vermes’,” *Die deutsche Literatur des Mittelalters. Verfasserlexikon*. Vol. 7: ‘Oberdeutscher Servatius’ – Reuchart von Salzburg, ed. Kurt Ruh et al. (Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1989), col. 853, and Vol. 11: *Nachträge und Korrekturen*, col. 1270.

**60** That the worm-affected creature referred to in the charm is a horse has been ascertained by Gerhard Eis, “Der älteste deutsche Zauberspruch,” *Altdeutsche Zaubersprüche*, ed. Gerhard Eis (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter & Co., 1964), 7–30; here 13–16, who interprets the word *tulli* (and the corresponding *strala* in the Old Saxon version *Contra vermes*, Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, cod. 751, fol. 188v) as “the horn sole of a horse’s hoof.” See also Hans-Joachim Behr, “Von Wodan bis Henne? Überlegungen zur Klassifikation und Pragmatik einiger althochdeutscher und altsächsischer Zaubersprüche,” *Sprache im Leben der Zeit: Beiträge zur Theorie, Analyse und Kritik der deutschen Sprache in Vergangenheit und Gegenwart: Helmut Henne zum 65. Geburtstag*, ed. Armin Burkhardt and Dieter Cherubim (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 2001), 335–50; here 340.

**61** Schulz, *Beschwörungen im Mittelalter* (see note 2), 57, highlights that this way of chasing demonic pathogenic creatures from the inside out can already be found in ancient Oriental and Indian texts. See also A. Kuhn, “Indische und germanische Segenssprüche,” *Zeitschrift für vergleichende Sprachforschung auf dem Gebiete des Deutschen, Griechischen und Lateinischen* 13 (1864): 49–78; here 68, and *The Book of Protection, Being a Collection of Charms now Edited for the First Time from Syriac Mss.*, ed. Hermann Gollancz (London: Henry Frowde, 1912), XXXIII.

**62** *Die kleineren althochdeutschen Sprachdenkmäler*, ed. Elias von Steinmeyer (Berlin: Weidmannsche Buchhandlung, 1916), 374: “Pro Nessia. Gang uz, Nesso, mit niun nessinchilion, uz fonna marge in deo adra, vonna den adrun in daz fleisk, fonna demu fleiske in daz fel, fonna demo velle in diz tullu. Ter Pater noster” (Against worms. Go out, worm, with nine small worms, out from the marrow into the veins, from the veins into the flesh, from the flesh into the skin, from the skin onto the hoof sole. Three Pater noster).

wurm zu menschen und pferden zu allerlei ein seggen" (Against worms in men and horses, a blessing against all of them). Moreover, very often, these formulas provide a synthetic account of the manners in which worms can damage the human or animal body: drinking its blood, devouring its flesh, breaking its bones, as in the following examples:

Ain seggen fur den wurm.

Sant Job ward geboren.

In desselben namen beschwerr ich dich, wurm (oder wie du genant bist), in disem roß wonend,

das du dir desselben ross blut nit lassest, noch sin flaisch nit essest, noch sine adren in allem sinem lib nit ruest.

In dem namen des vatters vnd des suns vnd des hailigen gaistes vnd in sant Eloyen namen, amen.

Vnd sprich drú pater noster. Vnd tu das drye morgen.<sup>63</sup>

[A blessing against the worm.

Saint Job was born. In his very name I enchant you, worm (or how you are called) living in this horse: may you not suck the blood of this horse, nor eat its flesh, nor touch the veins in all its body. In the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit and in the name of Saint Eloyen, amen. And recite three Pater noster. Do this on three mornings.]

+ In nomine patris et filii et spiritus sancti amen.

+ Der heilige herre sente Job lag in der stroze, do ðn dy worme und dy made aßen, dry worme wiz, dry grüne, dry rod, dy worme sind alle tod, dy sin gebein brachen, syn fleisch aßin und sin blud sögin [...].<sup>64</sup>

[+ In the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, amen. + The holy lord Saint Job lay on the street, where worms and parasites ate him, three were white, three green, three red. The worms are all dead, those which broke his bones, ate his flesh, and sucked his blood ...]

An analogous harmful behavior is described in a twelfth-century Latin blessing copied on the flyleaf of the twelfth-century manuscript Engelberg, Stiftsbibliothek, Cod. 33,<sup>65</sup> in which we find a list of seven demons – Nessia, Nagedo, Stechedo,

<sup>63</sup> Donauesching, Hofbibliothek, cod. 792, fol. 4v (fifteenth century), ed. Gerhard Eis, "Die Legende vom abgeschnittenen Pferdebein und die Eligius-Segen," *Altdeutsche Zaubersprüche*, ed. Gerhard Eis (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1964), 76–87; here 83–84.

<sup>64</sup> Dresden, Landesbibliothek, Mscr. M 21°, fol. 34vb (fourteenth century), ed. Ludwig Schmidt, "Beschwörung gegen Würmer," *Zeitschrift für deutsche Philologie* 40 (1908): 433.

<sup>65</sup> Karl Bartsch, "Alt- und mittelhochdeutsches aus Engelberg," *Germania. Vierteljahrsschrift für deutsche Alterthumskunde* 18 (1873): 45–72; here 46: "In nomine domini nostri ihesu christi. Tres angeli ambulaverunt in monte Synay. Quibus obviavit Nessia, Nagedo, Stechedo, Troppho, Crampho, Gigichte, Paralisis. Ad quos angeli dixerunt 'Quo itis?' Qui dixerunt 'Nos imus ad

Troppho, Crampho, Gigihte and Paralisis – afflicting (or possibly shaking) the patient’s head, weakening his/her pulse, emptying his/her marrow, wearing out his/her bones, and destroying the structure of the limbs. Because of both the presence of the name *Nessia* and the similarity between the *modus operandi* of the seven demons and that traditionally attributed to worms, this and other analogous formulas are usually grouped in with the above-mentioned all-embracing worm blessings.<sup>66</sup> Nevertheless, the effects of the action of the seven demons have also been interpreted as the different symptoms of a single pathology – epilepsy, even though the presence of *caducus morbus* listed along with cancer (*crancrum*) at the end of the series of the seven demon named in the thirteenth-century variant of the formula transmitted in Basel, Universitätsbibliothek, Cod. B V 21, fol. 120v<sup>67</sup> suggests that epilepsy was one of the pathologies treated with this blessing, but not the only one.

In these all-embracing magical formulas, worms can also be associated with pathologies whose etiology was not usually connected with them, such as, for example, cancer. In the fifteenth-century manuscript Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Clm 849 on fol. 119r we find the phrase *krebs worm* “cancer worm”, which seems to imply that cancer, as many other medical conditions, was caused by a worm:

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famulum dei. N. caput eius vexare, venas eius enervare, medullam evacuare, ossa eius conterere, et totam compaginem membrorum eius dissolvere.’ Quibus angeli iterum dixerunt ‘Adjuramus te, Nessia, Nagedo, Stechedo, Troppho, Crampho, Gigihte, Paralisis, per patrem et filium et s.s., per sanctam Mariam virginem et matrem domini, per apostolos, per martires, per confessores, per virgi, per omnes sanctos et electos dei, ut non noceatis huic famulo dei .N. non in capite, non in venis, non in medullis, non in ossibus suis, nec in aliqua parte corporis sui. Amen’” (In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Three angels were walking on the Mount Sinai. They encountered Nessia, Nagedo, Stechedo, Troppho, Crampho, Gigihte, Paralisis. The angels said to them: ‘Where are you going?’ They answered: ‘We are going to N., servant of God, to afflict his head, weak his pulse, empty his marrow, wear out his bones, and destroy the whole structure of his limbs.’ Then the angels said to them: ‘We conjure you, Nessia, Nagedo, Stechedo, Troppho, Crampho, Gigihte, Paralisis, in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, by the Holy Mary, Virgin and Mother of God, by the apostles, the martyrs, the confessors, the virgins, all the saints, and the elects of God: may you not harm this servant of God N., his head, his veins, his marrow, his bones, nor any other part of his body. Amen’). See also Elias Steinmeyer, “Ein Segen,” *Zeitschrift für deutsches Alterthum und deutsche Literatur* 17 (1874): 560; Elias Steinmeyer, “Segen II,” *Zeitschrift für deutsches Alterthum und deutsche Literatur* 21 (1877): 209, and Jörg Riecke, *Die Frühgeschichte der mittelalterlichen medizinischen Fachsprache im Deutschen*. Vol. 2: *Wörterbuch* (Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2004), 372.

66 See for example Holzmann, “*Ich beswer dich*” (see note 10), 217–18.

67 See Steinmeyer, “Ein Segen” (see note 65).

... Also gebudt ich uch ir bößen wurme daß is müßet rümen undt sterben Du syest es der wisze wurm der gele wurm der rod wurm der swarze wurm der nyt wurm der ryt wurm der hagken wurm der vßwerffende wurm der wodende wurm der wolff wurm der krebis wurm du syest derley wurm wilcherley wurm ankonfft aldir kranchheit ...

[ ... In the same way I order you, malicious worms, that you leave and die, if you are white, yellow, red or black, if you cause envy, fever, vomit or fury, if you are crooked, if you are a wolf or a cancer worm, if you are one of those worms which are the origin of all diseases ... ]

This idea, which is reinforced by the final reference to “those worms which are the origin of all diseases,” suggests that early modern popular medical conceptions progressively expanded and generalized projective etiologies well beyond the spectrum of diseases traditionally ascribed to them in learned medical sources.

## Conclusion

As the above-discussed examples from German medieval and early medical and magic sources have demonstrated, diseases were sometimes explained imaginatively, ascribing their onset to the presence of pathogenic worms of various kind. The existence of these worms was often (but not necessarily) postulated as a result of both analogic reasoning (i.e., if wormlike parasites exist and visibly infest the body, why could they not be responsible for other conditions?)<sup>68</sup> and the observation and physical examination of the sick. In this respect, the swollen pulpa of a rotten tooth or the shape of the pus flowing from an abscess possibly triggered the theories about the existence of tooth- and finger worms. Similarly, the appearance of small fragments of enamel or of blood and saliva clots after fumigation must have constituted a piece of evidence confirming the reality of tooth-worms.

Nevertheless, medieval and early medieval people further elaborated on these theories and started imagining these worms as similar to really existing creatures (e.g., maggots or eels) or attributing them particular colors and shapes. Insofar as the attention to these features certainly originated from magic and from the wish to identify harmful worms more precisely in order to enhance the possibilities of defeating them, with time the association of certain colors to a specific parasite became part of its ideal representation. Moreover,

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<sup>68</sup> On this see also Meaney, “The Anglo-Saxon View” (see note 2), 24.

the attribution of a specific feature to single categories of worms seems to be connected with the seriousness of the consequences of the pathology they caused: the more severe these were, the more peculiar and scarier was the appearance of the worm responsible for it. For this reason, it comes as no surprise that heart worms, which are considered particularly sneaky, since they led to sudden death, are depicted as having stag-like horns or, according to the source, wings and beak.

On the whole, projecting onto external agents the otherwise unknown etiology of a pathological condition and elaborating on their description and origin, medieval and early modern people were trying to account for inevitable circumstances in human life such as disease and death providing what – in their eyes – was a rational explanation for them. And, in some respect, their explanation was rational, after all: today their representation of variously-colored and devilish worms may appear naïve and ridiculous, but it would be enough to replace the word “worms” with contemporarily-used terms such as “germs,” “bacteria,” “viruses,” or “pathogenic agents” in order to have a fully acceptable and pretty accurate description of why a patient has caries, whitlow, or why a woman dies in childbed (as a consequence of sepsis). With the modern advancements in medical science and the development of modern bacteriology and virology proving the association of these pathologies to worm-like creatures to be unsubstantiated, all these projective etiologies would be labeled as “medieval” in a pejorative sense. But critics would then simply forget that the medieval medical authors had actually grasped the essence of the problem and that, in any case, their explanations constituted an attempt to overcome the immense gap between the human innate desire of knowledge and the limitations of the epistemological instruments at disposal for medieval and early modern people.





Edward Currie

# Political Ideals, Monstrous Counsel, and the Literary Imagination in *Beowulf*

Ne mēah-ton we gelæran lēofne þeoden,  
rices hyrde ræd ænigne,  
þæt hē ne grētte goldweard þone. [*Beowulf*, 3079–81.]<sup>1</sup>

[We could not advise the beloved prince,  
the guardian of the kingdom, any advice (give him),  
so that he would not attack the gold-guardian (i.e., the dragon)].

These words spoken by Wiglaf, King Beowulf's nephew, refer to the decision of the heroic ruler to fight a fiery dragon, resulting in the monarch's death. Larry D. Benson believes that Wiglaf speaks for the "*Beowulf*-poet and his audience who live in post-heroic times, and who now look back to assess critically the value of the heroic age that has passed."<sup>2</sup> In this heroic age, "Beowulf scorns the advice, as a hero must; but, as a result, many a man suffers ruin from 'anes willan.'"<sup>3</sup> Because he ignores the *ræd* of his companions, his kingdom is left without their strong ruler and thus open to attack and destruction by enemy tribes.

This moment strengthens the argument that the poem is a *speculum principum* (mirror for princes); that is, a text designed to instruct a prince on how to rule,<sup>4</sup> by

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1 Old English translations are mine, though I tend to follow the gloss of the most recent edition of the poem: *Klaeber's Beowulf and the Fight at Finnsburg: Fourth Edition*, ed. R. D. Fulk, Robert E. Bjork, and John D. Niles (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008).

2 Larry D. Benson, "The Originality of *Beowulf*," *Contradictions: from Beowulf to Chaucer: Selected Studies of Larry D. Benson*, ed. Theodore M. Andersson and Stephen A. Barney (New York: Scholar Press, 1995), 32–69; here 67.

3 Benson, "The Originality of *Beowulf*" (see note 2), 67.

4 Levin L. Schücking, "Wann Entstand der *Beowulf*? Glossen, Zweifel und Fragen," *Beiträge zur Geschichte der deutschen Sprache und Literatur* (1917): 347–410. He suggests that the poem was composed as a *Fürstenspiegel* (400; "mirror of a prince"), which met with Andreas Heusler's agreement in *Die altgermanische Dichtung* (Potsdam: Akademische Verlagsgesellschaft Athenaion, 1929), 184–86. Heusler asserts that *Beowulf* was a poem designed for an audience in a ruler's hall, or more specifically, a young prince who would be raised in a courtly, heroic, ecclesiastical manner. 184: "Mögen Cædmon und Cynewulf an klösterliche Hörer oder gar Leser gedacht haben, der Beowulfdichter wendet sich gewiß an eine Fürstenhalle—oder auch, noch bestimmter, an einen Fürstensohn, der heldisch-höfisch-kirchlich zu erziehen war."

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Edward Currie, Cornell University, Ithaca, NY, USA

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emphasizing the importance of counsel for a young ruler. Writing about political advice long predates our poem: the first mirrors for princes can be found in ancient Egypt and Mesopotamia, though the terms *specula principum* or *Fürstenspiegel* are not in the titles of any work before the twelfth century.<sup>5</sup> Cristian Bratu has pointed out that the Bible was a major source of inspiration for the mirror for princes genre in the Middle Ages because it features a number of royal figures with whom future Christian rulers could compare themselves; furthermore, kings in the early Middle Ages were viewed as representatives of God on earth.<sup>6</sup>

With this conception of kings and the rhetorical purpose of the text as a mirror for princes in mind, we can gain insight into how the author of *Beowulf* – certainly a Christian poet – *imagines* an ideal ruler by depicting examples of how rulers should behave. These examples could have inspired a young prince to compare himself to portraits of rulers who are both admirable and flawed – because they live in a pre-Christian era – and to emulate or to avoid similar behavior. Because of its fantastic characters, including a cannibalistic giant and a flying dragon, it can be tempting to ignore the poem’s didactic impact on its audience because it seems so remote from ‘reality.’ However, episodes about the force of counsel on kings represent the influence of certain ideals and values not only on the royal characters within the text, but also on the courtly audience who reflected on the story and was invited to learn from the lessons provided through Beowulf’s behavior and action. This strongly suggests that though it is set in the world of fantasy, the poem had ‘real world’ consequences because the audience was supposed to learn from these examples.

For example, the poet plainly praises Scyld Scefing, the founder of the lineage of Danish kings, who compels his neighbors to pay him tribute, with the memorable judgment “*Pæt wæs gōd cyning*” (line 11B; “That was a good king”). The poem, then, is not merely designed for the purpose of entertainment, but seems to have an educational function. This explicit moment calls out to the royal audience to apply Scyld Scefing’s exemplary behavior to their own reign.

This essay focuses on ‘negative examples’: that is, on episodes in the text in which the audience would have been instructed in how a ruler should *not* behave. I argue that the Old English poet imagines counsel (*ræd*) that promotes

5 Pierre Hadot, “Fürstenspiegel,” *Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum: Sachwörterbuch zur Auseinandersetzung des Christentums mit der antiken Welt*, vol. 8 (1972), 555–631; here 556–57.

6 Cristian Bratu, “Mirrors for Princes (Western),” *Handbook of Medieval Studies: Terms – Methods – Trends*, ed. Albrecht Classen, vol. 1 (Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2010), 1921–49; here 1927. See also Mark David Luce, “Mirrors for Princes (Islamic),” in the same volume, 1916–20.

violence as ‘monstrous’ in order to dissuade the audience from participating in martial conflict between humans.<sup>7</sup>

The noun *ræd* and the verb *rædan* are derived from the same root.<sup>8</sup> In the most recent edition of *Beowulf* the word *ræd* is defined in the glossary as “advise, help, and counsel” and *rædan* as “to advise, to explain,” but also “to control, to possess, and to rule.” Nicholas Howe points out that the etymological note in the second edition of the Oxford English Dictionary explains that *rædan* and its Germanic cognates share the principal meanings of “to give advice or counsel,” “to exercise control over something,” and “to explain something obscure” (s.v. *read*).<sup>9</sup> This range of meanings suggests the dramatic complexity of counselors in Germanic literature. They can provide help, advice, and explain obscurities: for example, Wiglaf and his companions offer salutary *ræd* to Beowulf when they attempt to dissuade him from fighting the dragon. In Old Norse literature, there is a sense that a hero may need a good counselor, as in *Njáls Saga* when the warrior Gunnar ignores – to his detriment – the advice of his wise friend Njál, by refusing to honor the settlement of a feud that requires him to be exiled and as a result is slain at home by his enemies.

In the Eddic poem *Atlaqviða*, when the Hunnish messenger Knéfrøðr invites King Gunnar to the Hunnish king Atli’s hall and offers him treasure, Gunnar turns to his brother Hǫgni and asks “Hvat ræðr þu ocr” (What do you advise us?).<sup>10</sup> Though the scene is quite brief, we see that even in this early poem there was a sense among the Norsemen that a hero’s adviser had an important function. Hǫgni attempts to instill caution in Gunnar:

“Hvat hyggr þú brúði bendo, þá er hon ocr baug sendi,  
varinn váðom heiðingia? hyggr ec, at hon vornuð byði;  
hár fann ec heiðingia riðit í hring rauðom:  
ylfscr er vegr occarr, at riða ørindi.”

7 In this way, *Beowulf* is very different from the *Finnsburh Fragment*. The narrator puts martial heroism in a completely positive light by idealizing the endurance of the Danish warriors who fight for days against the Frisians. The narrator underscores the Danes’ superlative capability in battle, and their complete loyalty to their lord Hnæf. See the *Finnsburh Fragment and Episode*, ed. Donald K. Fry (London: Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1974).

8 *A Concise Anglo-Saxon Dictionary*, J. R. Clark Hall, s.v. *ræd*, *rædan* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1960).

9 Nicholas Howe, “The Cultural Construction of Reading in Anglo-Saxon England,” *Old English Literature: Critical Essays*, ed. Roy M. Liuzza (New Haven, CT, and London: Yale University Press, 2002), 1–22; here 4–5. These Germanic cognates include Gothic *garēdan*, Old High German *rātan*, Old Saxon *rādan*, Old Norse *rāða*, and Old Frisian *rēda*.

10 *Edda: Die Lieder des Codex Regius*, ed. Gustav Neckel and Hans Kuhn. Vol. 1 (Heidelberg: Carl Winter Universitätsverlag, 1983), stanza 6.

[“What do you think the lady (i.e., their sister Guðrun) meant when she sent us a ring, wrapped in the hair of the heath-traveler? I think that she warned both of us. I found a hair of the wolf twisted around the red-gold ring: our way is wolfish if we go on this errand.”<sup>11</sup>]

Högni’s counsel, similar to Njál’s and Wiglaf’s, is to warn the hero against pursuing a path of certain doom. However, counselors can also exert control in a negative way by overpowering the minds of rulers and heroes.

Here I will examine a maleficent counselor’s influence on Ingeld, the prince of the Heaðobeards, whose name appears to have been the most popular foreign legendary name bestowed on Anglo-Saxons,<sup>12</sup> according to a recent investigation of Old English onomastic evidence.<sup>13</sup> Furthermore, Alcuin of York, an eminent scholar, mentions him in a letter composed in the year 797 and sent to the Mercian bishop Speratus in Leicester.<sup>14</sup> In a section of this letter the cleric argues against secular songs at monastic meals and he asks, “Quid Hinieldus cum Christo?” (“What has Ingeld to do with Christ?”).<sup>15</sup> Alcuin deems the pagan king incompatible with Christianity. Ingeld also appears in the Old English poem *Widsið*, where he falls in battle against the Danes at their hall, Heorot, and in *Beowulf* we witness the catalyst of this conflict: the counsel of an old spear-warrior in Ingeld’s tribe. This warrior – named Starkad in Germanic legend – has seemed to be far too carefully drawn to have been the invention of the *Beowulf* poet.<sup>16</sup>

11 Neckel and Kuhn, ed., *Edda* (see note 10), 8.

12 C. M. Millward, *A Biography of the English Language* (Boston, MA: Thomson Wadsworth, 1996), 78. I use the conventional phrase ‘Anglo-Saxons’ to refer to the peoples who migrated to Britain from the Continent in the fifth century, though other peoples also made transmarine journeys there (e.g., the Jutes and the Frisians.)

13 Leonard Neidorf, “Beowulf before *Beowulf*: Anglo-Saxon Anthroponymy and Heroic Legend,” *Review of English Studies* 64 (2013): 553–73; here 561. *The Northumbrian Liber Vitae* contains 2,819 names, making it “by far the richest source of names from early Anglo-Saxon England.” Neidorf finds sixteen men who bore the name Ingeld, and because the two elements of this dithematic name (i.e., In- and -geld) were not individually very productive in the Old English onomasticon, he argues that it was probably bestowed according to a custom in seventh- and eighth-century England by which children were named after figures from heroic legend. Ingeld is the most popular foreign legendary name the scholar finds.

14 Donald A. Bullough, “What has Ingeld to do with Lindisfarne?,” *Anglo-Saxon England* 22 (December 1993): 93–125; here 102. Bullough argues that “Speratus” should be identified as Bishop Unwona of Leicester.

15 Bullough, “What has Ingeld to do with Lindisfarne?” (see note 14), 93. “Verba Dei legantur in sacerdotali convivio. Ibi decet lectorem audiri, non citharistam; sermones patrum, non carmina gentilium. Quid Hinieldus cum Christo?”

16 Roberta Frank, “Conversational Skills for Heroes,” *Narration and Hero: Recounting the Deeds of Heroes in Literature and Art of the Early Medieval Period*, ed. Victor Millet and Heike

I argue that the author of *Beowulf* thinks like Alcuin because he finds fault with the legend, though not just because of Ingeld. The poet dwells on Starkad's incitement of blood revenge at Ingeld's court, making him look monstrous because he is responsible for renewing the conflict between the Danes and the Heaðobeards. Furthermore, the warrior is a descendant of giants and is closely connected to Odin, the chief Norse god, who himself possesses powerful eloquence and a dubious moral code. In E. O. G. Turville Petre's opinion "We might expect the northern god of war to be noble, valiant, and an example to every soldier, but Óðinn was far from that. According to the sources in which he is most fully described, he was evil and sinister. He delighted especially in fratricidal strife and in conflict between kinsmen."<sup>17</sup> Odin uses his words to aid and destroy royal figures in Norse legend, and the portrait of the god seems to have inspired the depiction of Starkad. There is a tendency in scholarship to blame the Danes for instigating the conflict,<sup>18</sup> but these readings are rendered improbable when we examine the menacing old instigator in Ingeld's hall.

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Sahm. *Ergänzungsbände zum Reallexikon der germanischen Altertumskunde*, 87 (Berlin and Boston: Walter de Gruyter, 2014), 19–43; here 31, "As was noted long ago, the aged spear-warrior who does the inciting resembles the hero Starkaðr the Old ... it is as if in *Beowulf*, as sometimes in Vergil, hearers are expected to detect a suppressed etymology, to recover a name from its attributes." Russell Poole argues, "... it is reasonable to conclude that the unnamed warrior in the Ingeld story represents not merely a closely similar 'Proppian' function to Starcatherus in the Ingellus story but in fact, as de Vries, for example, has maintained (1955, 284), the same legendary personage," "Some Southern Perspectives on Starcatherus," *Viking and Medieval Scandinavia* vol. 2, 141–66; here 156.

17 E. O. G. Turville Petre, *Myth and Religion of the North* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1964), 51.

18 John M. Hill, inspired by Vilhelm Grønbech, argues that "the ancient heirlooms are worn either in amazing ignorance by the bride's attendants [i.e., the Danish retainers] or in no subtle despite of the Heathobards. The former seems most incredible. The latter possibility is not, as though in wearing those appropriated weapons the Danes are saying this: 'we may give you our princess, Freawaru, to wed and thus to penetrate sexually, but we wear the emblems of your fathers' castrations – those fathers of yours that our fathers killed.'" "The Ethnopsychology of In-Law Feud and the Remaking of Group Identity in *Beowulf*: The Cases of Hengest and Ingeld," *Philological Quarterly* 78.1–2 (Winter–Spring 1999): 97–111; here 105. Scott Gwara believes the Danes "flaunt captured Heaðobard weapons (2032A)." *Heroic Identity in the World of Beowulf*. *Medieval and Renaissance Authors and Texts*, 2 (Boston and Leiden: Brill, 2008), 111. Kemp Malone's theory, which lacks textual evidence, is that the Dane who sports the sword "was meant to be insulting to the Bards. Why should he behave in this way? Here I will say only that I take him to have been a rival suitor for the hand of Freawaru, resentful of the fact that Hrothgar had set him aside in favor of a foreign hereditary foe." "The Tale of Ingeld," *Studies in Heroic Legend and in Current Speech*, ed. Stefán Einarsson and Norman E. Eliason (Copenhagen: Rosenkilde and Bagger, 1959), 1–62; here 17.

The structure of the Ingeld Episode<sup>19</sup> in *Beowulf* is complicated because the interaction between Starkad and Ingeld appears in a prophecy made by the eponymous hero. That is, the audience is told of events that have not yet occurred but are, according to *Beowulf*, highly probable. Critics tend to interpret the episode as an illustration of the hero's intelligence;<sup>20</sup> however, the role of the spear-warrior as a monstrous counselor in the English poem has been little explored. I argue that his role should be examined in order to understand the literary design of the episode and the messages the poet conveys about such counsel at court for the edification of his aristocratic audience.

*Beowulf* is probably a text of ecclesiastical origin, written by a cleric. Patrick Wormald writes: "At the very least, it is difficult in the circumstances to envisage a *Beowulf* poet who was barely tinged with Christian values, or even one who could write English but not read Latin, and it seems reasonable to proceed on the basis that the author of *Beowulf* was most probably a cleric, or an associate of the clergy."<sup>21</sup> The central fable about the monster-slayer seems morally instructive, as *Beowulf*'s three most memorable opponents seem to be allegorical creatures who stand for sins. Grendel is relentlessly wrathful against and resentful of the Danish people, Grendel's Mother is depicted as vengeful and eager for slaughter, and the dragon's greed is so great that the beast becomes enraged over the theft of a single cup from its hoard. The hoard of treasure, for which *Beowulf* fights the dragon, is itself described as cursed heathen gold. I will show that the text had at least additional didactic purposes because it provided royal advice in its digressions, particularly in the Ingeld Episode which features the adverse power of a pre-Christian, Odinic counselor and the way he promotes hostility between humans.

Upon his return home to the Geats, *Beowulf* reports to king Hygelac, his uncle and lord, about his journey abroad. He has just rescued the Danes from the rampages of the Grendel family of monsters. Hygelac asks him about his encounter with Grendel:

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<sup>19</sup> Adrien Bonjour, *The Digressions in Beowulf* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1965). Bonjour refers to the digression as the "Ingeld Episode," 56. Hereafter I will do so without quotation marks.

<sup>20</sup> Arthur G. Brodeur, *The Art of Beowulf* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1959), 178, suggests: "The poet was not concerned to tell the story of Ingeld as it was known already to his hearers; he wished to use it to illustrate *Beowulf*'s wisdom and political insight." Andy Orchard writes "Even the fact that the unnamed 'aged spear-warrior', in inciting the unnamed 'young fighter' should apparently allude to the otherwise unknown Withergyld only underlines the rhetorical force of *Beowulf*'s words" *A Critical Companion to Beowulf* (Woodbridge, Suffolk: Boydell & Brewer, 2003), 243.

<sup>21</sup> Patrick Wormald, "Bede, 'Beowulf,' and the Conversion of the Anglo-Saxon Aristocracy," *The Times of Bede*, ed. Stephen Baxter (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2006), 30–105; here 37.

“Hu lomp ēow on lade, lēofa Biowulf / þā ðū færinga feorr gehogodest / sæcce sēcean  
ofer sealt wæter, / hilde tō Hiorote?” [1987-1990A]

[“How did it turn out for you on your journey, beloved Beowulf, when you suddenly resolved to seek strife far over salt water, battle at Heorot?”]

Initially, Beowulf responds by telling Hygelac that his fight with Grendel is “not hidden” (“undyrne,” line 2000A), an understatement about his famous triumph over the monster. But then, instead of describing the fight with Grendel, Beowulf tells his lord about the engagement of the Danish princess Freawaru to Ingeld, and makes an elaborate prediction about this union after which the prince will probably be embroiled in tribal hostility. That Hygelac’s question triggers this response strongly suggests that the conflict in the Ingeld digression should be understood to be at least as monstrous as his encounter with Grendel, who has been vanquished at this point; that Grendel has been defeated makes the Ingeld episode even more horrific because this calamity seems impending and insoluble.

There are didactic sides to this episode, which a prince could have learned from. Beowulf speaks directly to Hygelac, and this prediction seems meant to instruct the young king, who is recently married himself, like Ingeld. The seating arrangements are such that Beowulf sits close to Hygelac as he speaks to him: the hero acts as his lord’s adviser, offering this forecast about Ingeld as a warning, stressing the danger of allowing a vengeful personage to exert influence at court. His account begins with what appears to be a proverb.

Oft seldan hwær  
æfter lēodhryre lytle hwīle  
bongār būgeð, þēah sēo brȳd duge.  
(2029B–2031)

[Seldom anywhere  
after the fall of a people even for a little while  
does the deadly spear rest, though the bride may be good.]

With this sentence, the hero obviously critiques king Hroðgar’s choice to marry his daughter Freawaru to Ingeld in order to promote peace between the recently feuding tribes: it is ill-conceived because ill-timed. He predicts that Starkad, described as an old spear-warrior (“eald æscwiga”) will likely advise a youth in his tribe to avenge his elders on a Danish retainer who wears his father’s sword. After the young man exacts blood revenge, Beowulf imagines that Ingeld will repudiate his wife and break his compact of peace with the Danes. The prince’s role is truncated: he is merely referred to as “gladum suna Frōdan” [2025B] (“the fair son of Froda”) in the beginning of the prophecy, and his own name appears

just six lines before the prediction ends (2064). Ingeld is thought to have been famous in heroic narratives in which revenge was presented as admirable, presumably for his father Froda who had been slain by the Danes in a previous battle, according to Arthur G. Brodeur.<sup>22</sup> If he is correct, the author presents Ingeld minimally in the digression because he does not want to glorify vengeance taken by a prince. Instead, the threatening old spear-warrior occupies center stage. Starkad's speech – directly quoted – sways the unnamed youth to commit murder at court, so that the old man also stands for a certain eloquence.

This *exemplum* takes two approaches to educating the audience: the first is Beowulf's explicit judgment of Hroðgar's plan, while the episode that follows reinforces that message in the form of a dramatic narrative in which monstrous counsel prevails at court. When Ingeld is finally represented as breaking his peace treaty with the Danes, Beowulf's explicit opinion appears again to question the integrity of the Heaðobeards on the basis of the behavior that the elder promotes.

þý ic Heaðo-Bear[d]na hyldo ne telge,  
dryhtsibbe dæl Denum unfæcne,  
fréondscipe fæstne. [2067-9A]

[Therefore I do not think the loyalty of the Heaðobeards  
their portion of the tribal peace with the Danes  
to be a firm friendship without malice.]

R. W. Chambers points out that “What is emphasized in *Beowulf* is not so much the struggle of the mind of Ingeld as the stern, unforgiving temper of the grim old warrior who will not let the feud die down ...”<sup>23</sup> This desire for conflict and contempt for peace can be found in representations of Odin. For instance, Turville Petre points out that Odin himself boasts in the Eddic *Hárbarðsljóð*, an exchange of insults between Thor and Odin, “I incited princes, and never made peace” (“atta ek jofrum, en aldrei sættak”).<sup>24</sup> We find further evidence of Starkad's sinister nature by examining his more literal monstrous characteristics in tradition. In the Eddic *Helgaqviða Hundingsbana ǫnnor* he is depicted

<sup>22</sup> Arthur G. Brodeur, *The Art of Beowulf* (see note 20), 176: “If, in the lays known in eighth-century England, the person who avenged his slain father had been anyone other than Ingeld himself, there would have been no legend of Ingeld: the hero of such lays would have been the actual slayer, and he would have had a personality and a name. Germanic lays know no nameless heroes.”

<sup>23</sup> R. W. Chambers, *Beowulf: An Introduction to the Study of the Poem with a Discussion of the Stories of Offa and Finn* (1921; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, rpt. 3rd ed. 1963), 22.

<sup>24</sup> E. O. G. Turville Petre, *Myth and Religion of the North* (see note 17), 210.



with memorable physical and moral deformities, as he is cast as an enemy of the hero named Helgi. He is the son of a human king Granmar, and yet Helgi reports to his lover Sigrún that he observed Starkad fighting even after being decapitated.

Enn at Styrkleifom Starcaðr konungr,  
enn at Hlébiörgom Hrollaugs synir;  
þann sá ec gylfa grimmúðgastan,  
er barðiz bolr var á brot hofuð.

[And at Styr-cleft king Starkaðr  
and at Hleiðrg the sons of Hrollaug;  
I saw that fiercest-minded of kings  
defending his trunk, his head was gone.”<sup>25</sup>]

Friedrich Klaeber connected the word “grimmúþgastan” with the word “grim” used to describe the “sefa” (“mind”) of the *eald æscwiga* in the Ingeld Episode of *Beowulf*.<sup>26</sup> The superlative adjective “grimmúðgastan” has been discussed much more recently by Klaus von See and his collaborators who point out that the adjective *grimmúðigr*, which appears only one other time in Eddic literature (in *Atlamál* 59), has a range of negative definitions: “grimmig gesonnen; feindselig gesonnen; verbittert.”<sup>27</sup> If grimness is a monstrous trait in Germanic poetry – and we must note that “grimm” is the descriptor used to introduce Grendel in *Beowulf* (“wæs se grimma gæst Grendel hāten”<sup>28</sup>) – then it adds to the dark portrait of Starkad. Klaeber’s connection between Starkad’s grim-mindedness and the grim “mind” (“sefa”) of the spear-warrior whose advice shapes the fate of his tribe, suggests that moral dubiousness is a traditional, essential quality of this character.

Starkad’s connection to Odin and his other monstrous aspects are also memorably depicted in the younger version of *Gautreks Saga*.<sup>29</sup> This is one of the *fornaldarsögur* (“sagas of ancient times”). Geoffrey V. Smithers writes that these sagas

25 Neckel and Kuhn, ed., *Edda* (see note 10), *Helgaqviða Hundingsbana ǫnnor*, 27.

26 *Beowulf and the Fight at Finnsburg: Third Edition with First and Second Supplements*, ed. Friedrich Klaeber (London: D. C. Heath and Company, 1950), 202.

27 *Kommentar zu den Liedern der Edda 4: Heldenlieder*, ed. Klaus von See, Beatrice La Farge, Wolfgang Gerhold, Debora Dusse, Eve Picard, and Katja Schulz (Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag, Winter, 2004), 715–16 (“grimly minded; hostile minded; embittered”).

28 *Beowulf*, 102, “The grim guest was named Grendel.”

29 *Die Gautrekssaga in zwei Fassungen*, ed. Wilhelm Ranisch (Berlin: Mayer and Müller, 1900). In his introduction, Ranisch presents the differences between the older and younger versions of the saga. The younger, longer version contains the *þátrr* (short story) of Starkaðr.

in their extant form were composed during the period 1200–1400. These works are characterized by subject-matter and adventures of a fantastic kind. The origin, descent, and age of the story-materials is in many instances unknown; and the later examples of this type of saga are believed to be in greater or lesser degree fiction. But the earlier ones undoubtedly go back to much older legends, sometimes heroic legends originally told in verse.<sup>30</sup>

The saga author inserted an older poem called the *Víkarsbálkr*, in which Starkad laments the wicked things the gods have forced him to do.

Odin takes the form of Starkad's old foster-father in the saga, named Grani Horse-hair. King Víkarr, Starkad's foster-brother, values him most of all his retainers, and appoints him as his counselor. This is a useful narrative analogue to the Ingeld episode because here too Starkad is a counselor at a young king's court.

His grandfather, also named Starkad, is a giant who abducts a princess named Álfhild. After a consideration of the semantic range of the word "monster" in the O.E.D., Ruth Waterhouse writes "The semantic field combines various possibilities, such as the following: -natural or human + deformity (physical and/or moral) + large size. Not all of these need to be copresent."<sup>31</sup> Starkad's grandfather meets all the criteria: he is inhuman, huge, and morally deformed: Thor must step in to slay the giant and rescue King Álf's daughter.

Her father, King Álf calls on Thor to bring his daughter back: the strong god slays Starkad and restores Álfhild to her father. That Starkad's grandfather is a giant ("jötunn"<sup>32</sup>) and that he abducts a princess makes him appear monstrous; his monstrous characteristics serve to separate him from society, rather like the fate of his grandson in the saga, who is ultimately banished from his home in Hordaland for slaying his lord, King Víkarr, an impressive warrior, because Odin orchestrates – through Starkad – the death of the king.

One night Starkad is taken by Odin to an island where Thor and Odin take turns shaping his fate. As Thor and Odin compete with each other by cursing and blessing him, the youth never interrupts or contradicts them. Thor's curses are quite severe, as after Odin grants the man three lives, he declares that "He shall commit a most foul deed in each one of them."<sup>33</sup> Reduced to a mere witness, Starkad waits silently as they shape his fate, unaware of the moral plight he will soon be in with his lord Víkarr. It must be significant that Thor is the

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30 Geoffrey V. Smithers, *The Making of Beowulf: Inaugural Lecture of the Professor of English Delivered in the Appleby Lecture Theatre on 18 May, 1961* (Durham, England: University of Durham, 1961), 12.

31 Ruth Waterhouse, "Beowulf as Palimpsest," *Monster Theory: Reading Culture*, ed. Jeffrey Jerome Cohen (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), 26–39; here 27–28.

32 *Gautrekssaga* (see note 29), 12.

33 *Gautrekssaga*, "Hann skal vinna níðingsverk á hverjum mannzalldri" (see note 29), 29.

last one to speak, as it strongly suggests that misfortune is in store for Starkad. The giant-slaying god ends the conversation with a final curse “The common people shall hate him every one.”<sup>34</sup> Afterward, Odin approaches him with a deadly design in mind.

Þá mællti Hrosshárs-Grani til Starkaðs: “Vel muntu nú launa mér, fóstri, liðsemd, þá er ek veitta þér.” “Vel,” sagði Starkaðr. Þá mællti Hrosshárs-Grani: “Þá skalltu nú senda mér Víkar konung, en ek mun ráðin til leggja.”

[“You should repay me well, foster-son, for all the help I’ve given you,” said Grani Horsehair to Starkad. “That I will,” said Starkad. “Then you must send King Vikar to me,” said Grani Horsehair. “I’ll tell you how to go about it” (i.e., literally, give you counsel on how to accomplish this).”<sup>35</sup>]

Georges Dumézil argues that because Odin has raised Starkad, the youth is indebted to him. He points out that this obligation is clear because Odin refers to him as his foster-son (“fóstri”) when asking him to slay the king.<sup>36</sup> Odin’s use of this word, and that he tells Starkaðr he will give him advice (“ráðin”), hints at the god’s capacity for cunning, deceit and manipulation.

Odin’s desire to recruit Víkarr in the afterlife is behind the design of this fatal trap. The belief that dead warriors go to Odin’s fortress, *Valhøll*,<sup>37</sup> is already present in the tenth-century Norse poem *Eiríksmál*, about the arrival in Odin’s hall of the dead hero Eirik Blood-Axe, and *Hákonarmál*, about the reception in *Valhøll* of the Norwegian King Hakón the Good: the assumption is that dead heroes live in Odin’s palace and await Ragnarök. Odin was strongly characterized as the leader of the *Einherjar*<sup>38</sup> (that is, the champions in *Valhøll*) and the lord of *Valhøll*; the god is a friend and ally of some kings and also wants them brought to *Valhøll*, though they must be slain to arrive there. Víkarr has become a sufficiently accomplished and powerful warrior that Odin desires his presence and wants him to join the ranks of the *Einherjar*. In the *Saga of the Volsungs*, another *fornaldarsaga*, Odin himself breaks Sigmund the Volsung

34 *Gautrekssaga*, “Leiðr skal hann alþýðu allri” (see note 29), 30.

35 *Gautrekssaga* (see note 29), 29. Translation adapted from Hermann Pálsson’s and Paul Edward’s *Seven Viking Romances* (New York and London: Penguin Classics, 1985).

36 Georges Dumézil, *The Stakes of the Warrior*, trans. David Weeks, ed. Jaan Puhvel (1986, vol. 2 part 1 of *Mythe et épopée*; Berkeley, CA, and London: University of California Press, 1983), 26.

37 *Valhøll* means “hall of the slain,” *An Icelandic-English Dictionary*, ed. Richard Cleasby and Guðbrandur Vigfússon (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1957), s.v. *Valhöll*.

38 Neckel and Kuhn, ed., *Edda* (see note 10), “Vafðruðnismál,” stanza 41 “Allir einherjar Óðins túnom í / höggvaz hverian dag; / val þeir kjósa ok riða vígi frá, / sitia meirr um sáttir saman” (“All of the Einherjar in Odin’s fortress fight each other every day. They kill and ride from the battle, then sit together reconciled”).

king's sword with his spear in his last battle against King Lyngvi, presumably because he wants him to join the champions in *Valhöll*: Sigmund seems to realize this when he refuses his wife's attempt to heal him: "Odin does not want me to draw the sword, for now it lies broken. I have fought battles while it was his pleasure."<sup>39</sup> The same god helps Sigurd, Sigmund's son, to avenge his father, not only in this saga (ch. 17), appearing with the significant name "Hnikar" ("Inciter") but also in the "Reginsmál" of the *Poetic Edda*,<sup>40</sup> to aid in the development of young Sigurd as a warrior whom he presumably wishes to recruit in the afterlife. Also, readers of *Völsunga Saga* know that in the last chapter of the saga, the deity induces the end of the Völsung dynasty by advising their enemy, the Gothic King Jörmunrekkr. The monarch asks Odin for "ráð" ("counsel"),<sup>41</sup> and the god tells him to stone the last male Völsungs, Hamðir and Sörli, which brings about their demise. It is noteworthy that Hamðir and Sörli seek to avenge their sister Svanhild's execution on the Goths, whose death was orchestrated by the Odinic counselor Bikki, who gave Jörmunrekkr much "evil advice" ("ill ráð").<sup>42</sup> Bikki first convinces him to sentence his son, Randvér, to death, after encouraging Randvér to take as his mistress Svanhild, the king's wife, and then telling the king what his son has done. Just before the king's son is killed, he plucks all of the feathers from a hawk, and has it shown to his father. When the king sees the bird he realizes that his son considers him as bereft of honor as the hawk is of feathers, a moment that makes clear the tragedy and shame of the situation. The ruler orders that his son be taken down from the gallows, but it is too late, for Bikki has seen to it that Randvér is dead by then. Remarkably, the king continues to listen to the counselor. Bikki tells him that Svanhild should be slain in a shameful manner, and the king simply replies "I will take that advice."<sup>43</sup> The ruler then has her trampled by horses. The counselor's words persuade the monarch to the point that he is wholly controlled by him, suggesting that this dark adviser owes his capacity for mental manipulation to Odin, whose controlling words can seal the fate of others.

When the king puts his head in the noose he says it does not look dangerous, but also adds that if things turn out otherwise, it is because of fate

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39 *Völsunga Saga: The Saga of the Volsungs*, ed. and trans. R. G. Finch (London: Thomas Nelson and Sons Ltd., 1965), 21: "Vill Óðinn ekki at vér bregðum sverði, síðan er nú brotnaði. Hefi ek haft orrustur meðan honum líkaði."

40 Neckel and Kuhn, ed., *Edda* (see note 10), 178–79.

41 *Völsunga Saga*, "Gef oss ráð til ef þu kannt" (see note 39, 78; "Give us advice about it if you can").

42 Neckel and Kuhn, ed., *Edda* (see note 10), 178–79.

43 Neckel and Kuhn, ed., *Edda* (see note 10), "Þat ráð munu vér taka."

(“auðna”).<sup>44</sup> His sense that this might lead to his death also highlights the force of counsel in this scene as he follows Starkaðr’s instructions even though he detects the danger of doing so. After Starkaðr puts the noose around the sovereign’s head we witness his sudden death.

Þá stakk Starkaðr sprotanum á konungi ok mællti: “Nú gef ek þik Óðni.” Þá lét Starkaðr lausan furukvistinn. Reyrsprotinn varð at geir ok stóð í gegnum konunginn. Stofninn fell undan fótum honum, en kálfsþarmarnir urðu at viðju sterkri, en kvistrinn reis upp ok hóf upp konunginn við limar, ok dó hann þar. Nú heita þar síðan Víkarshólmar.

[Then he stabbed the king with the reed-stalk. “Now I give you to Odin,” he said. Then Starkaðr let go of the fir branch. The reed-stalk turned into a spear which pierced the king, the tree stump slipped from under his feet, the calf guts turned into a strong withy, the branch shot up with the king into the foliage, and there he died. Ever since, that place has been known as Víkarshólmar.<sup>45</sup>]

Starkad is made to look like an instrument of Odin, as he arranges objects so that the god can act through them. The combination of the dramatic gesture – stabbing the king with the reed-stalk – direct speech, and the magical transformations of objects makes this scene very vivid: the warrior’s invocation of Odin’s name as part of a ritual formula – just before the deadly contraption executes the king – makes it clear that Starkad has become a vessel through which Odin acts.

A closer examination of the passage reveals how it conveys a message about advice. The scene emphasizes that though Víkarr is a mighty warrior and ruler in the saga, Starkad is rather easily able to convince him to put his head in a trap, and in turn we realize that Starkad himself is easily persuaded by Odin to participate in this deed. This repetition underscores that counsel can be poisonous. Both Starkad and Víkarr are pawns in the hands of the mastermind Odin.

Starkad is used by the god to kill the king magically. In his *Ynglinga Saga*, Snorri Sturluson describes a deeply shameful and evil side of Odin’s magic:

Óðinn kunni þá íþrótt, svá at er mestr mátt fylgði, ok framdi sjálfr, er seiðr heitir, en af því mátti hann víta orlög manna ok óorðna hluti, svá ok at gera mǫnnum bana eða óhamingju eða vanheilindi, svá ok at taka frá mǫnnum vit eða afl ok gefa þórum. En þessi fjǫlkyngi, er framið er, fylgir svá mikil ergi, at eigi þótti karlmǫnnum skammlaust við at fara, ok var gyðjunum kennd sú íþrótt.

[Odin knew and practiced that craft which brought most power and which was called ‘seiðr.’ And he therefore knew much of man’s fate and of the future, likewise how to

<sup>44</sup> *Gautrekssaga* (see note 29), 30: “en ef qðruvís er, þá mun auðna ráða, hvat at gjörizt” (“but if it is otherwise, then fate will advise what will be done”).

<sup>45</sup> *Gautrekssaga* (see note 29), 30.

bring people death, ill-luck or illness, or he took power and wit from them and gave it to others. But in promoting this sorcery, lack of manliness followed so much that men seemed not without shame in dealing in it; the priestesses were therefore taught this craft.<sup>46]</sup>

The negative meaning of “lack of manliness,” which the Norse word “ergi” denotes, may explain Odin’s sneaky nature: he is not physically present when Víkarr is slain, but rather uses Starkad and his own magic to accomplish the deed. In the Ingeld Episode contained in *Beowulf*, Starkad behaves similarly to Odin.

Manað swā ond myndgað mæla gehwylce  
 sarum wordum oð ðæt sæl cymeð  
 þæt se fæmnan þegn fore fæder dædum  
 æfter billes bite blōdfāg swefeð,  
 ealdres scyldig; him se oðer þonan  
 losað (li)figende, con him land geare.

[2057-62]

[So he urges and prompts at every chance  
 with grievous words until the time comes  
 that the woman’s thane, for his father’s deeds  
 sleeps blood-stained after the bite of the sword,  
 having forfeited his life; thence the other man  
 escapes with his life, he knows the land well.]

That Starkad kills by proxy is reminiscent of the way Odin slays Víkarr. The old man himself does not slay the Danish retainer, but verbally compels a younger retainer in his tribe to slay him, as in Odin’s deceit and manipulation of Starkad. Furthermore, Odin gives Starkad the counsel (“ráðin”) to sacrifice the king, which is similar to Starkad’s counsel to the young fighter in the Ingeld episode, the evil advice of Bikki to king Jǫrmunrekkr, and Odin’s advice to the Gothic king which destroys the Volsung dynasty.

The shame that surrounds the participants in these wicked deeds is represented by the young Heaðobeard murderer who flees from the hall, king Jǫrmunrekkr, who realizes his lack of honor when his son sends him the plucked bird, and Starkad who expresses great shame over Víkarr’s death after he slays him: he articulates his despair over his participation in the killing and considers his slaying of his king to be “the worst and most reprehensible deed

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<sup>46</sup> *Heimskringla*, 19. vol. 1, ed. Bjarni Aðalbjarnarson (Reykjavík: Hið Íslenzka Fornritafélag, 1941), 19. Translation taken from *Heimskringla, Or the Lives of the Norse Kings*, ed. Erling Monsen and trans. A. H. Smith (1932; New York: Dover Publications Inc., 1990), 5.

he has done.”<sup>47</sup> In the *Víkarsbálkr*, a poem embedded in the saga, he poignantly voices the grief he feels for participating in Víkarr’s sacrifice.

Skyldak Víkar  
í viði hávum,  
Geirþjofs bana,  
goðum of signa  
lagðak geiri  
gram til hjarta;  
ðat er mér hermast  
handaverka.<sup>48</sup>

[I had to mark Víkarr  
on a high tree,  
the slayer of Geirþjof,  
for sacrifice to the gods.  
I put a spear  
through the prince’s heart;  
that is to me the most painful  
of my doings.<sup>49</sup>]

His evident grief evokes sympathy for Starkad and makes plain that even this mighty figure could not resist Odin’s wishes: he is powerless before the god, who seems particularly unscrupulous for orchestrating the death of Starkad’s beloved lord by using the warrior and leaving him in a state of despair.

The spear is the weapon that kills Víkarr, and it seems significant that the old warrior in *Beowulf* is described as a spear-warrior (*æscwiga*) because it adds to his Odinic profile. In the Eddic *Helgaqviða Hundingsbana ǫnnor*, after the hero Helgi slays his lover Sigrún’s relatives in battle, her brother Dag decides on revenge. Dag sacrifices to Odin, who lends him a spear to slay the protagonist. This weapon’s connection to Odin is also exemplified by Gizurr, the ancient Odinic adviser at the Gothic prince Angantýr’s court, who instigates a war between the Goths and the Huns in the *Saga of King Heidrek the Wise*. In an address to the Huns, Gizurr refers to Odin’s wrath and dooms them to death: he hurls his spear over them to dedicate the Huns to the deity:

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<sup>47</sup> *Gautrekssaga* (see note 29), “at honum þykkir þetta eitthvert verk sitt vest ok óskapligast orðit hafa, er hann drap Víkar konung,” 32 (“he thinks that this deed is the worst and most reprehensible that he has done, when he killed King Víkar”).

<sup>48</sup> *Eddica Minora: Dichtungen eddischer Art aus den Fornaldarsögur und anderen Prosawerken*, ed. Andreas Heusler und Wilhelm Ranisch (Dortmund: W. Ruhfus, 1903), “Der Víkarsbálkr,” stanza 20.

<sup>49</sup> My translation.

(99) “Felmtr er yrðu fylki,  
feigr er yðarr vísir,  
gnæfar yðr gunnfani,  
gramr er yðr Óðinn!

Ok enn:

(100) Byð ek yðr dylgju  
á Dunheiði,  
orrostu undir  
Jassarfjöllum;...  
ok láti svá Óðinn flein fljúga  
sem ek fyrir mæli!”

[(99) (“Daunted are your legions,  
doomed your leader,  
banners rise over you,  
Ódin is wrathful!”

And then he said:

(100) “On the Danube-Heath  
below the Hills of Ash  
I call you to fight, your foes meeting;...  
may Ódin let the spear  
fly / as I prescribe it!”<sup>50</sup>]

These counselors do not fight with spears: their lack of physical participation in martial conflict maps onto Odin’s use of magic to slay Víkarr and the spear-warrior’s manipulation of the youth with fatal words at Ingeld’s court. Furthermore, Gizurr’s behavior shows that an Odinic counselor’s pernicious influence is not limited to the destruction of individuals, but can also affect large groups. This power is critical in the Ingeld Episode because there too an Odinic figure instigates conflict not just between two individuals, but also between two tribes: the Danes and the Heaðobeards.

This tribal conflict is criticized by the *Beowulf* poet. In the first description of the splendid Danish hall, Heorot, its tragic destruction is also anticipated.

Sele hlifade  
hēah ond horngēap; heaðowylma bād,

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**50** *Saga Heiðreks Konungs ins Vitra: The Saga of King Heidrek the Wise*, ed. and trans. Christopher Tolkien (London: Thomas Nelson and Sons Ltd., 1960), 56. Tolkien translates Gizurr’s “flein” as “dart” but it can also mean “a kind of shaft,” i.e., a spear. See Cleasby and Vigfússon, *Icelandic-English Dictionary* (see note 37), s.v. *Fleinn*.



lāðan liges – ne wæs hit lenge þā gēn  
 þæt se ecghete āþumswēoran  
 æfter wælniðe wæcnan scolde (.

[The hall towered  
 high and wide-gabled (it) awaited hostile flames  
 enemy fire not was it yet long  
 that the sword-hate between son-in-law and father-in-law  
 was to awake after deadly hate. (81B–85)

Heorot stands tall and horn-gabled, but awaits hostile flames because of the future battle between son-in-law and father-in-law, Ingeld and Hroðgar, after hostility should awake (“æfter wælniðe wæcnan scolde”). The word *wælnið* is very rare in the poem: it is used to describe Ingeld’s hostile feelings (“wælniðas”) toward the Danes and to describe the future battle in Heorot, which, as Andy Orchard observes, ties the two moments closely together.<sup>51</sup> In this terse description of Heorot, there can be no doubt that the *Beowulf* poet refers to the future strife – which is not far in the future (“ne wæs hit lenge”) – between the Danes and the Heaðobeards, and that the Danish hall will be set on fire during their battle. Battle is only hinted at here, and the outcome of the encounter is not represented in detail: that the poet emphasizes the end of the hall when it is first introduced suggests that he wants to stress the utter destruction that results from the conflict between these tribes. That this war will result in the destruction of such a fine hall stresses the waste caused by warlike behavior, though the narrator does not present any details of the fighting itself. His allusion to the battle is very different from the account of it in *Widsið*.

Hroþwulf ond Hroðgar heoldon longest  
 sibbe ætsomne, suhtorfædran,  
 siþþan hy forwræcon Wicinga cynn  
 ond Ingeldes ord forbigdan,  
 forheowan æt Heorote Heaðobeardna þrym.

[Hroþwulf and Hroðgar held longest  
 peace together, uncle and nephew  
 after they expelled the Viking people  
 and brought low Ingeld’s vanguard,  
 cut down at Heorot the troop of Heaðobeards.<sup>52</sup>]

<sup>51</sup> Andy Orchard, *A Critical Companion to Beowulf* (see note 21), 242. Ingeld’s deadly hatred “wælniðas” (line 2065A) is connected to the word “wælniðe” in line 85A.

<sup>52</sup> *The Exeter Book*, ed. Philip Krapp and Elliott Van Kirk Dobbie. Anglo-Saxon Poetic Records, 3 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1936), 45–49.

The Heaðobeards are first referred to as the vanquished “Wicinga cynn” (“Viking people”), then the defeat of Ingeld’s vanguard is touched upon, and finally the downfall of his Heaðobeard soldiers is mentioned in the next line: by essentially conveying the same message three times, especially in such an economical poem of only 144 lines, the poet emphasizes the importance of the Danish rulers’ success in battle for Hroþwulf’s and Hroðgar’s long, peaceful reign: the three verbs “forwræcon,” “forbigdan,” and “forheowan” alliterate and emphasize their impressive victory. Hroþwulf’s and Hroðgar’s relationship is described concisely as that of “suhtorfædran” (“uncle and nephew”). The word is a dvandva, or copulative compound, and its form stresses their closeness. These compound words are very rare in Germanic literature, but this linguistic form was known to the *Beowulf* poet because he describes the relationship between Hroþwulf and Hroðgar, who sit peacefully in the Danish hall, Heorot, as “suhter(ge)fædran” (“uncle and nephew”).<sup>53</sup> The only other example of this kind of word in Old English literature also appears in *Beowulf*: “apumsweoran” (“son-in law and father-in law”). The word describes the relationship between Hroðgar and Ingeld. The rare sorts of linguistic correspondences that characterize relationships between persons involved in the Danish-Heaðobeard conflict argue for a connection between the lore that was known to the *Widsið* poet and that which the *Beowulf* poet knew, though they clearly depicted the legend very differently. This version of the legend in *Widsið* conveys a set of beliefs about kingship and heroism: the martial success of the Danish kings is idealized, as triumph in battle is equated with good governance. The narrator focuses on the benefits of the battle. The poet of *Beowulf* holds the opposite view concerning combat between humans, which he tends to leave untold and/or to criticize.

The future fire that will consume Heorot is alluded to again in *Beowulf* when it hovers in the background almost seven hundred lines after the great hall is introduced: during the combat between Beowulf and Grendel, their struggle damages the building and the narrator tells us that before their fight the wise men among the Danes did not think the hall could be harmed except by flame.

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<sup>53</sup> Leonard Neidorf, “The Dating of *Widsið* and the Study of Germanic Antiquity,” *Neophilologus* 97.1 (2013): 165–83; here 169. He observes that there are only four copulative compound words extant in Germanic literature. *Beowulf* 84 “apumsweoran” (“son-in-law and father-in-law”), *Beowulf* 1164 “suhter(ge)fædran” (“nephew and uncle”), almost the same word as “suhtorfædran” (“nephew and uncle”) in *Widsið* 46, in the Old High German *Hildebrandslied* 4 “sunufatarungo” (“son and father”), and the Old Saxon *Heliand* “gisunfader” (“son and father”) 1176.

Þæs ne wēndon ær witan Scyldinga,  
 þæt hit ā mid gemete manna ænig  
 betlic ond bānfāg tōbrecean meahte,  
 listum tōlūcan, nymþe liges fæþm  
 swulge on swaþule.

[Before this the wise men of the Scyldings (did) not expect  
 that it (the hall) ever in any way any man  
 splendid and decorated with bone (ivory?) could shatter  
 pull apart with craft, unless the embrace of fire  
 should swallow (it) in flame.<sup>54</sup>]

That Heorot seemed to the Danish *witan* only susceptible to fire shows just how impressive the legend of Ingeld must have seemed to the poet: in the very first description of the hall we learn that the hall will be burned in the battle between the Danes and the Heaðobeards. During the important fight between hero and monster the poet takes the time to include the Danes' theory about how Heorot could be destroyed: the verb *swulge* ("should swallow") in the subjunctive is an example of the poet's play with perspective and time, as the characters in the poem cannot yet know of the hall's catastrophic destruction: this legendary knowledge lies between the narrator and his audience, and it is one of the moments in the poem where the lore of the legend is assimilated by the narrator and represented in a new way, as part of the background during a fight between his main characters. This notion of discord between groups lurking in the background is an aspect of the monstrous violence that the poem indicts. These reminders of the destruction of Heorot underscore that though Grendel can no longer attack the hall and prevent peace for years, it will inevitably be destroyed by tribal conflict: this fact makes peace seem impossible, and suggests that the war Starkad will awaken will be even more monstrous than Grendel's attacks.

Friction between persons is brought before our eyes in the Ingeld Episode when Beowulf envisions the old warrior advising a young Heaðobeard to slay a Danish retainer.

Þonne cwið æt bēore sē ðe bēah gesyhð  
 eald æscwiga sē ðe eall ge(man)  
 garcwealm gumena – him bið grim (se)fa –  
 onginneð geōmormōd geong(um) cempan  
 þurh hreðra gehygd higes cunnian,  
 wīgbealu weccēan ond þæt word ācwyð:  
 "Meaht ðū, mīn wine, mēce gecnāwan,  
 þone þīn fæder tō gefeohte bær

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54 *Beowulf*, 778–782A.

under heregriman hindeman siðe,  
 dyre iren, þær hyne Dene slōgon,  
 wēoldon wælstōwe, syððan Wiðergyld læg,  
 æfter hælepa hryre, hwate Scyldungas?  
 Nū hēr þara banena byre nathwylces  
 frætwum hremig on flet gæð,  
 morðres gylpe(ð) ond þone mādþum byreð,  
 þone þe ðū mid rihte rædan sceoldest.”

[2041–2056]

[Then he speaks at the beer-feast, he who sees the treasure,  
 the old spear-warrior, who remembers all  
 the spear-death of men – his heart is grim –  
 sad of mind, he begins in a young champion  
 to make an intense test of his mind,  
 to stir up war-bale and utters these words:  
 “Can you, my friend, recognize the sword,  
 which your father bore in the fight  
 under the war-mask in the last time,  
 the excellent sword, where the Danes slew him,  
 they controlled the battle-field, after Wiðergyld lay dead,  
 after the death of warriors, the vigorous Scyldings?  
 Now here a son of one of his slayers  
 goes about in the hall, exulting in his trappings,  
 he boasts of the murder and bears the treasure,  
 which you should rightly possess.”]

It has long been noticed by scholars that the ancient figure is the only speaker in the episode.<sup>55</sup> His ability to sway the youth underscores the power of his words,<sup>56</sup> which not only relate memories of a past battle but also incite future action in the young fighter to retrieve his father’s sword by slaying the Danish retainer: he mentions or refers to the sword three times (“mēce,” “dyre iren,” “mādþum”) and it must be considered the focal point of the speech. The aged warrior asks the youth if he can recognize the weapon, then explains the significance of the sword, and ends his speech by telling him what he should do (“sceoldest”); examining the structure of his rhetoric makes us realize the way the junior soldier is manipulated:

55 Andreas Heusler, *Die altgermanische Dichtung* (see note 4), 170. In his analysis of the “Ingjaldlied,” a reconstruction of the legend’s ancient form, Heusler points out that “es hat nur einen Sprecher, den alten Starkad” (“it has only one speaker, old Starkad”).

56 John M. Hill, “The Ethnopsychology of In-Law Feud and the Remaking of Group Identity in Beowulf” (see note 17), 109, comments on how the old retainer’s speech turns the young man into an “agent of death.”

the aged figure poses no mere question of recognition, but rather uses the presence of the sword to emphasize the youth's filial obligation and spur him to take severe action against the weapon's new owner.

When the Odinic man describes the Dane as one who "boasts of murder" ("morðres gylpe[ð]"), we ought to be suspicious because this description of the Dane comes solely from the elder – outside of his speech there is no suggestion that the young retainer boasts about anything. This is the senior soldier's interpretation of a young Dane who wears the sword without realizing the danger of doing so in the presence of an old Heaðobeard who "remembers all" of the past fighting ("eall ge[man]"). What he tells the young Heaðobeard about the Danish retainer's behavior seems to be an exaggeration meant to manipulate him.

His rhetoric also emphasizes the death of the Heaðobeards, as he remembers a past battle against the Danes that they lost. There is no glory in the events he recalls and we know from *Widsið* that the Heaðobeards will fall again to the Danes in the future: this fact enhances the sense of doom invoked by his words. It seems that the spear-warrior is sending Ingeld and his warriors to death by reactualizing this conflict; the versions of the legend in both poems are wholly compatible with each other. That the *æscwiga* utters his baleful speech "æt beore" ("at the beer-feast") puts him in line with other monsters such as Grendel and Grendel's mother, who bring strife into the mead-hall and end the merriment, conviviality, and peace between humans.

Furthermore, the leisurely pace of the speech grants the audience time to ponder the elder's focus on revenge. The *æscwiga* – who wants to requite with blood the death of his fallen comrades – appears as monstrous as Grendel's Mother, who is vengeful in retaliation for Beowulf's slaying of her son;<sup>57</sup> she takes blood revenge on one of King Hroðgar's beloved retainers, Æschere. Her physical assault, though, is very different from the strategy of the old warrior who brings about strife by verbally compelling the young man to take action.

The words that precede his speech clearly underscore his mental strength "onginneð geomormod geong(um) cempa / þurh hreðra gehygd higas cunnian" [2044–45] ("sad of mind, he begins in a young champion / to make an intense test of his mind"). Line 2045, "þurh hreðra gehygd higas cunnian," could be translated literally as: "through the thought of his spirit, to test his mind." R. D. Fulk and his collaborators point out that "The somewhat redundant *þurh hreðra gehygd* appears to emphasize the intensity of the searching."<sup>58</sup>

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57 *Beowulf*, 1276B–8: "Ond his mōdor þā gýt / gifre ond galgmōd gegān wolde / sorhfulne sið, sunu dēoð wrecan" ("And then his mother / greedy and sad in mind, wished to go / on a sorrowful journey, to avenge her son's death").

58 *Beowulf*, 232.

This description explicitly glosses the old warrior's speech, as he reminds the young retainer of his obligation, but also tests his mind, which suggests that he wants to manipulate him. The verb *cunnian*, "to test," can also mean "to prove, try, inquire, search into, seek for, explore, examine, tempt, venture."<sup>59</sup> This meaningful verb intimates the old man's capacity to dominate another's mind even before he delivers his eloquent speech to the young man, who seems powerless to contradict him because he says nothing at all. The elder manipulates him in a way that is redolent of other Odinic figures, and even Odin himself.

The *eald æscwiga* has several Odinic traits: he is old, grim, eloquent, and of dubious morality. He wishes to awaken war-bale – "wigbealu" – a word that contains an element also present in one of Odin's names: "Bolverkr" ("Evil-doer").<sup>60</sup> The "bealu" and "bøl" elements of these compound words are significant because both mean "bale."<sup>61</sup> After examining analogues in which we have seen the ability of Odinic figures, and Odin himself, to incite others into conflict, it should be clear that this old Heaðobeard is the baleful instigator in the narrative. It is significant that the verb *rædan* turns up in the veteran's speech<sup>62</sup> because this verb and its cognates share the meanings "to give advice or counsel" and "to exercise control over something." The senses of advice and control come out significantly in this episode, as the elder exercises control over the youth by means of his verbal influence.

Hengest, the hero of the Finnsburh Episode, is pushed into action by advice similar to that of the old warrior in Ingeld's court. After Beowulf's victory over Grendel, at the banquet of celebration, the Danish court poet sings of how peace was broken between a group of Danes and Frisians. The lord of the Danes, Hnæf, falls in battle after the Frisians attack him and his followers in the hall of the Frisian King Finn, where he is a guest. As with the strife between the Heaðobeards and the Danes we lack any description of the battle, which is merely referred to as "ðā hīe se fæ̃r begeat" ("when the sudden attack fell upon them"<sup>63</sup>). This could not be more different from the longer account of the night battle between the Danes led by the Danish prince Hnæf, and their Frisian hosts in the *Finnsburh*

<sup>59</sup> *An Anglo-Saxon Dictionary*, ed. Joseph Bosworth and Thomas Northcote Toller (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1882–98), s.v. *cunnian*.

<sup>60</sup> Snorri Sturluson's *Edda: Skáldskapamál* 1, ed. Anthony Faulkes (London: Viking Society for Northern Research, 1998). Odin, disguised with the name Bolverkr, steals the mead of poetry from a giant named Suttungr, and delivers it to the gods in Ásgarð.

<sup>61</sup> Bosworth and Toller's *Anglo-Saxon Dictionary*, s.v. *bealu* (see note 59), and Cleasby and Vigfússon, *Icelandic-English Dictionary* (see note 37), s.v. *Böl*.

<sup>62</sup> See note 8.

<sup>63</sup> *Beowulf*, 1068B.

*Fragment.* Both sides make a treaty of peace, and Finn declares with oaths that none of the Frisians will break their truce, but Hengest ponders vengeance, probably for his lord.

Fundode wrecca,  
 gist of geardum; hē tō gyrenwraece  
 swiðor þōhte þonne tō sælade,  
 gif hē torngemōt þurhtēon mihte,  
 þæt hē Eotena bearn inne gemunde—  
 swā hē ne forwyrnde woroldrædenne—  
 þonne him Hūnlāfing hildelēoman,  
 billa sēlest on bearm dyde,  
 þæs wæron mid Eotenum ecge cūðe.  
 Swylce ferðfrecan Fin eft begeat  
 sweordbealo sliðen æt his selfes hām,  
 siþðan grimne gripe Gūðlaf ond Ōslāf  
 æfter sæsiðe, sorge mændon,  
 ætwiton wēana dæl: ne meahte wæfre mōd  
 forhabban in hrepre. Ðā wæs heal roden  
 fēonda fēorum, swilce Fin slægen,  
 cyning on corþre, ond sēo cwēn numen,

[1137B–1153]

[The exile was eager to go,  
 the guest from the dwelling; he of revenge,  
 thought more than of his voyage,  
 if he could bring about a hostile meeting  
 in which he bore in mind the sons of the Jutes,  
 so he did not refuse the universal obligation  
 when the son of Hunlaf, placed Battle-Light,  
 the best of swords, in his lap,  
 its edges were well known among the Jutes.  
 Thus befell to Finn, bold in spirit, afterwards  
 cruel death by the sword in his own home,  
 after Guthlaf and Oslaf bemoaned the grim attack,  
 the injury after the sea-voyage,  
 they assigned blame for their measure of woes;  
 not could the breast restrain the restless heart.  
 Then the hall was reddened, with the life-blood of foes, also Finn was slain,  
 the king among his host, and the queen was taken.]

Hengest does not refuse “woroldrædenne,” which Donald K. Fry glosses as “universal obligation (i.e., revenge)”<sup>64</sup> when the son of Hunlaf, perhaps a warrior in Hengest’s warband, places a sword in his lap: what makes Hengest like

64 *Finnsburh Fragment and Episode*, ed. Donald K. Fry (see note 8), 79.

the young warrior in the Ingeld episode is that he is goaded to take action, and the significance of the word “woroldrædenne,” namely, the *ræd* to take revenge, recalls the old warrior’s incitements. The use of a sword to stir up revenge is reminiscent of the old spear-warrior guiding the young warrior’s sight to his father’s sword, except that the men who do speak to Hengest in the Finnsburh Episode, Guðlaf and Oslaf, bemoan the grim attack from the Frisians indirectly: their words are not quoted and their complaints occupy little space in the digression, unlike the impressive and powerful speech made by the *eald æscwiga*.

Because the episode is set in the past it can be said to complement the Ingeld Episode, set in the future, underscoring how history would go on to repeat itself, as these old tribes repeatedly attacked each other because of the value they placed on revenge. Less explicit and detailed is the process by which conflict is renewed: there is no figure like the *eald æscwiga*, with an impressive quoted speech. There are also no words in the form of a proverb to evaluate the situation explicitly. Furthermore, the group of Danes agrees on the necessity of revenge: this makes the Ingeld episode seem more tragic, as the majority of the personages in that narrative are initially willing to forgive and forget past grievances, but the old warrior wants blood revenge and changes young minds to the point that they take up arms because of his instigation.

The critique of martial action that involves blood revenge in the Finnsburh Episode is also implicit in the absence of glory in the description of the battle between Finn and Hengest: in fact, it is hardly represented, as we are merely told that “Then the hall was reddened, with the life-blood of foes, also Finn was slain” (“*Ðā wæs heal roden / fēonda fēorum, swilce Fin slægen*”). This minimal description of conflict is similar to the young warrior’s slaying of the Danish thane in the Ingeld Episode, as Beowulf predicts “that the woman’s thane, for his father’s deeds / sleeps blood-stained after the bite of the sword” (“*pæt se fæmnan þegn fore fæder dædum / æfter billes bite blōdfāg swefeð*”). There is no awe in these words, only bloody consequences.<sup>65</sup>

The evil of such strife seems to be further underscored when we examine the influence of Starkad’s words on Ingeld himself.

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<sup>65</sup> Fidel Fajardo-Acosta, *The Condemnation of Heroism in the Tragedy of Beowulf: A Study in the Characterization of the Epic*. Studies in Epic and Romance Literature, 2 (Lewiston, NY, Queenston, Ont., and Lampeter, Wales: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1989), 67. Fajardo-Acosta points out that the poet depicts this feud to convey a strong moral criticism about violence between kin: “The slaying of Finn’s and Hildeburh’s son in the Finnsburg Episode dramatizes this point: the victim of the feud between Danes and Frisians is both a Dane and a Frisian – the feuding parties end up destroying their own kin.”



Ɔonne bīoð (āb)rocene on bā healfe  
 āðsweorð eorla; (syð)ðan Ingelde  
 weallað wælnīðas, ond him wiflufan  
 æfter cearwælmum cōlran weorðað  
 [2063-66]

[Then are broken on both sides  
 the oaths of earls; after in Ingeld  
 surges hostility, and his love for his wife  
 after seethings of sorrow grows cooler.]

The old retainer has a powerful effect on the prince; as a result of his goading Ingeld goes through an emotional crisis: he seethes with sorrow, falls out of love, and surges with hostility, which leads to war, as is suggested by the statement that oaths will be broken on both sides. The poet dramatizes the effect of the warrior's influence, which wipes out the passionate bond between Ingeld and Freawaru. Because the prince only pays attention to the actions of his courtiers once one of them has committed murder, it seems that he had been preoccupied with his new wife. Furthermore, in the most similar extant narrative analogue, Starcatherus hurls many insults at prince Ingellus for his intimate and unorthodox relationship with his wife in the sixth book of Saxo Grammaticus's *Gesta Danorum* ("Deeds of the Danes"); therefore, we can infer that his passion is present in this earlier version of the legend. In his analysis of the ideal ethic of a Christian prince,<sup>66</sup> Diego Quaglioni finds that this ethic includes not only a struggle against sin but also that the prince control his passion. The *Beowulf* poet seems to draw a similar moral here as the prince becomes consumed with the love of his wife to the extent that he is unaware of the underlying hostility at his own court, until a murder takes place.

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66 Diego Quaglioni, "Il modello del principe cristiano: Gli 'specula principum' fra Medio Evo e prima Età Moderna," *Modelli Nella Storia Del Pensiero Politico*, ed. Vittor Ivo Comparato. Il pensiero politico / Biblioteca, 14 (Florence: Leo S. Olschki, 1987), 103-22; here 109-10. Quaglioni bases this analysis on his reading of *De Institutione regia* by Jonas, bishop of Orleans, in the ninth century: "Gli attributi della regalita (oltre quello tipico che consiste nell'agire rettamente: *rex a recte regendo*) sono tutti misurati all'interno di un ideale etico del principe, inteso nel senso di un'etica individuale e personale, fondata sul dominio delle passioni e sulla lotta al peccato" ("The attributes of royalty [beyond the superficial idea of royalty that consists of acting rightly: *rex a recte regendo*] are all measured within an ideal ethic of the prince, understood in the sense of an individual and personal ethic founded on the ruling of passion and the struggle against sin").

His rule is presented in *Beowulf* as a negative example<sup>67</sup> because the old spear-bearer has the opportunity to influence a young member of the *comitatus* to take blood revenge without their leader noticing. The martial values seem harmful to humanity and civilization on various levels: passionate love will fade, tribes will go to war, and the finest hall will burn. Whether Ingeld was famous for avenging his father or warring with the Danes, or both, the author includes nothing about armed conflict outside of court, instead focusing on the breakdown of peace internally in order to educate his royal audience about the ultimate effect of an old warrior's influence at the center of political power.<sup>68</sup> Furthermore, because Beowulf's speech stops short of telling about the battle between the Danes and the Heaðobeards, the poet avoids any hint of greatness in battle: the picture merely looks tragic in a court setting.

The legend of Ingeld was developed by the *Beowulf* poet to critique groups ruled by a battle-centered ideology: the poet analyzes the disintegration of peace in Ingeld's court, brought about by a tyrannical figure who abhors compromise in matters of honor and prefers force. The poet casts the old spear-bearer in a monstrous light: he appears evil in his role as an Odinic counselor who brings strife to the Heaðobeards' hall.

By adapting this legendary narrative the author advises that a prince should not allow the archaic dictates of revenge to reign in court. Because Beowulf is capable of a detailed political analysis of Ingeld's future, the poem seems to urge that ideal rulers should act like the eponymous hero and think for themselves: a counselor has the potential to overpower the mind of a prince and send him and his tribe to their doom.<sup>69</sup> The innovation of the

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<sup>67</sup> A similar text, which instructs a ruler in good and bad behavior, is *The King's Mirror*: (*Speculum Regale – Konungs Skuggsjá*), trans. Laurence Marcellus Larson (New York: Twayne Publishers and The American Scandinavian Foundation, 1917) 250. "Nor must he (i.e., a king) be so severe in his penalties that God and rightminded men will regard him as punishing more from a cruel disposition than from a sense of justice."

<sup>68</sup> Saxo Grammaticus, *Gesta Danorum*, ed. Karsten Friis Jensen and trans. Peter Fisher, vol. 1 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2015), 440–43. The author explicitly depicts Ingellus acting to avenge his father and to destroy his political enemies.

<sup>69</sup> Albrecht Classen, "The Principles of Honor, Virtue, Leadership, and Ethics: Medieval Epics Speak Out against the Political Malaise in the Twenty-First Century: *The Nibelungenlied* and *El Poema de Mio Cid*," *Amsterdamer Beiträge zur älteren Germanistik* (forthcoming). *Beowulf* is not the only Germanic heroic 'epic' to underscore the danger of counsel to a ruler and his people. Classen interprets the relationship between King Gunther and his adviser, Hagen, in the *Nibelungenlied* as follows: "Altogether, then, the poet of the *Nibelungenlied* projects an amazingly weak king who does not know how to govern, how to collect the best advice, who is completely subject to Hagen's strategies and advice, which altogether brings about the complete

*Beowulf* poet was to dramatize the collision of two types of counsel. A good king should want to promote peace in his community, an ideal that King Hroðgar represents in his choice to marry his daughter to Ingeld; however, the old counselor, Starkad, exerts his influence to override the old Dane's irenic plan. The poet imagines a time when the value of blood revenge is prevalent to the extent that peace seems impossible: even Beowulf, who is the closest to an ideal king in the poem and can see the flaws in the timing of Hroðgar's plan, ignores the good counsel of his comrades and decides to fight the dragon himself, which is a decision that seals the fate of his people. The dream of an ideal ruler seems unattainable during the ancient time period of the poem, but the poet's representation of rulers who fail to consider the long-term consequences of their decisions is an ambitious move, as he uses his literary imagination to draw examples of kings in order to edify rulers in his own day.

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downfall of the entire group of Burgundians." Of course, Hagen has his own agenda, and he certainly can be characterized as a liminal figure.



Daniel F. Pigg

## Who is Grendel in *Beowulf*? Ambiguity, Allegory, and Meaning

When readers encounter *Beowulf*, they meet a character, a monster, a misshapen humanoid, and a being linked with the descendants of Cain who are presented as trolls, elves, and the revenant.<sup>1</sup> All of these are part of the imaginary and ideological landscape in which the poet allows Grendel to perform his activities that promote chaos. Grendel's heritage is mysterious, and his bodily status, to say the least, challenging. Being the stuff of legend and found in a poem that is deeply rooted in the cultural memory of a people and written down by a literate poet who continually reminds readers who "grefrugnon" (2; have heard) the story in an oral stage, *Beowulf* is thus subject to the kinds of reading that were common in the day. That is to say, allegory is both found in the poem and would likely have been a part of the way that early interpretations of the poem would have been conducted as a natural part of the reading and hearing experience. Assuming that the poet of *Beowulf* is a monk, as most scholars believe, it would have been natural for him to think in terms of implicit allegory as a tool for bringing meaning to the poem, even in passages where to modern readers allegory would be unnecessary. Further, Richard North argues that a monastic setting for writing would have put the poet in touch with texts such as commentaries on Genesis and the representation of the monstrous in such texts as First Enoch.<sup>2</sup> That Grendel is given bodily features is a product of need. In an earlier stage of the legendary material, Grendel might have represented fog, disease, or plague as scholars in the nineteenth century contended. Certainly, by the time the poem is written, Grendel clearly has a discernable form, but he is no more containable than ethereal aspects of nature that surround his representation.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> All text references to *Beowulf* are to *Beowulf and the Battle at Finnsburg*, ed. Friedrich Klaeber. 3rd ed. (Boston: D. C. Heath and Co., 1950). All translations of the Old English text are my own, unless noted otherwise.

<sup>2</sup> Richard North, *The Origins of Beowulf: From Vergil to Wiglaf* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 66–99. See also R. E. Kaske, "Beowulf and the Book of Enoch," *Speculum* 46 (1971): 421–31. See also the contribution by Warren Tormey in this volume.

<sup>3</sup> Also included in this collection of essays is a piece by Edward Currie. He explores the concept of negative kingship. He too sees significant problems in the world of Danish rulership, but from a different angle.

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Daniel F. Pigg, University of Tennessee at Martin, USA

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Whatever Grendel is, he represents the cultural other that is deeply encoded into the poem. He represents the embodiment of chaos that is always at the edges of the social order in Germanic society, and it may also be lurking in plain sight in the politics of the kingdom. The layering of imagery around Grendel is purposeful, and it is in unpacking the various layers that readers see precisely the challenge represented in sixth-century Scandinavia. The ambiguity itself is purposeful. Does he have a glove, which might signal he is human? Does he have a claw that is tacked up on the wall in Heorot, which would associate him with a beast, and yet still have fingers? Could he be the presentation of plague which was thus personified? From the beginning, the poet calls him a descendant of Cain, something that could be read in both literal but more likely symbolic ways. At some level, readers are more concerned about what he does rather than about all the aspects of what he might be. Skilled readers must consider both angles.

In the second portion of the poem dealing with Beowulf's return to the land of the Geats, readers have been more easily persuaded to see the fire dragon whom Beowulf defeats and from whom Beowulf receives his death wound in terms of allegory.<sup>4</sup> Beowulf may or may not have defeated greed in its symbolic manifestations. He wins gold for his people, even if they bury it with him. If we as modern readers follow a symbolic reading of the first portion of the poem, we may learn more about why Grendel has been such a significant terror to defeat. The second portion of the poem may compromise a simple reading of the poem that clears Beowulf of the potential of greed, but that is by no means certain.<sup>5</sup> In the first portion of the poem, Grendel exists as a complex of images, and that complexity turns him into one of the most deadly creatures in the literature of the early Middle Ages. He represents raw and unchecked power. Grendel is the stuff of legend even as Hrothgar notes with his references to what the older generations said about the Grendels and their heritage, but that Grendel flares up at this particular point in time in Hrothgar's court is not unusual. He is the literal and symbolic manifestation of problems in the Danes' world.

This essay asserts that the mysterious figure that is called "Grendel" in the poem is a representation of the monstrous as such in the poem, but that if

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<sup>4</sup> Margaret E. Goldsmith, *The Mode and Meaning of Beowulf* (London: The Athlone Press, 1970). This is a classic study regarding the allegory of the poem. Exegetical critics of the poem have furthered these ideas.

<sup>5</sup> See Daniel F. Pigg, "Cultural Markers in *Beowulf*: A Re-Evaluation of the Relationship between Beowulf and Christ," *Neophilologus* 74 (1990): 1–17. I suggest in this article that allegory is still possible without embracing the totalizing effects proposed by exegetical critics.

readers are expecting a simple monster story, they are likely going to be disappointed. The poet, in fashioning his story from a variety of oral sources and cultural strata, creates a figure that is ambiguous, a character whose threatening nature bespeaks the end of a civilization, and a character whose nature prevents a simple good versus evil struggle, given that the poet paints the “good” with similar features of Grendel. In one sense, it appears that the poet is attempting to refine what heroism is. In the poet’s own conflictual understanding of the Danes’ naturalistic religion and his Christian worldview, he attempts to find a reasonable and possible synthesis of those two religious perspectives.

## Defining the Monstrous

To begin with, it may be prudent to take a somewhat transhistorical look at monster theory proposed in terms of a series of theses by Jeffrey Jerome Cohen. The following are a summary of possible experiences relative to the role of the monster and monstrosity in the larger culture: “The monster’s body is a cultural body. The monster always escapes. The monster is the harbinger of the category crisis. The monster dwells at the gates of difference. The monster polices the boundaries of the possible. The fear of the monster’s body is a kind of desire. The monster stands at the threshold of becoming.”<sup>6</sup>

These general statements require some unpacking to establish the groundwork for an analysis of how Grendel functions. Grendel’s acts operate at each of these levels, and his standing at the “gates of difference” is both the appeal and fear of Grendel. With respect to the cultural body, Cohen writes that the monster “incorporates fear, desire, anxiety, and fantasy (ataractic or incendiary), giving them life and an uncanny independence.”<sup>7</sup> Grendel simply chooses to come and maintain the twelve-year reign of terror that he has at Heorot. He seems to organize day and night, given that the Danish warriors leave when they know he is coming. He controls the night. The fact that he confines his action against a single building that is a part of Hrothgar’s compound is likely significant and revealing. Even like Scyld Scefing, Grendel “egsode eorl[as]” (5; terrified earls). Scyld required payments of tribute; Grendel’s control is more mysterious. Even his name “Grendel” has occasioned a good deal of interest as the meaning is hard to unscramble, and as E. G. Stanley suggests, that allows the poet to keep his name

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<sup>6</sup> Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, “Monster Culture,” *Monster Theory*, ed. id. (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), 3–25.

<sup>7</sup> Cohen, “Monster Culture” (see note 6), 4.

“uncommunicative” even as Grendel is.<sup>8</sup> When Cohen notes that the “monster always escapes,”<sup>9</sup> readers and listeners observe the occurrence of the twelve-year period of his reign in Heorot. As several scholars have noted, the poet uses the word “aglæca” most often to describe Grendel, but it is also used to describe Beowulf at certain points. Klaeber provided a translation of “wretch, monster, demon, fiend” for Grendel, but when used to describe Beowulf, he translates the word as “warrior, hero.”<sup>10</sup> More recent readers might wonder if there is greater equivalence between Grendel and Beowulf than meets the eye.<sup>11</sup> Does Beowulf rise to the level of the monstrous to escape and destroy Grendel? Clearly the poet does not want us to have any sympathy for Grendel, although both Scyld Scefing and Beowulf have some noticeable parallels verbally and behaviorally speaking.<sup>12</sup>

Readers might also wonder what specific kinds of crisis Grendel represents, given that monsters always bring about or constitute chaos. In that case, they have only to look at the first description of Grendel as an offspring of Cain and then to note that Unferth is taunted by Beowulf as killing his own kindred, and in the second portion of the poem, there are several killings of brothers in the genealogy of the Geats.<sup>13</sup> In that way, Grendel comes to represent a primal element of chaos right at the heart of civilization in the poem. Grendel’s death, however, does not bring about social change. Such chaos is still embodied among both the Danes, and, in the second portion of the poem, the Geats.

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**8** E. G. Stanley, “A Very Land-Fish, Languageless, a Monster’: Grendel and the Like in Old English,” *Monsters and the Monstrous in Medieval Northwest Europe*, ed. Karin E. Olsen and L. A. J. R. Houwen. Mediaevalia Groningana, New Series, 3 (Leuven and Paris: Peeters, 2001), 79–92; here 90–92.

**9** Cohen, *Monster Theory* (see note 6), 4.

**10** Klaeber, ed., *Beowulf* (see note 1), 298.

**11** Katherine O’Brien O’Keefe, “Beowulf, Lines 720b–836: Transformation and Limits of the Human,” *Texas Studies in Language and Literature* 23 (Winter 1981): 484–94; here 484–85; Melinda J. Menzer, “AGLÆCWIF(Beowulf 1259A): Implications for WIF Compounds, Grendel’s Mother, and Other AGLÆCAN,” *English Language Notes* 34.1 (1996): 1–6; Albrecht Classen, “The Epistemological Function of Monsters in the Middle Ages: From *The Voyage of Saint Brendan* to *Herzog Ernst*, Marie de France, Marco Polo and John Mandeville. What Would We Be Without Monsters in Past and Present!” *Lo Sguardo: Rivista di filologia* 9.2 (2012): 13–34; online available at [https://www.academia.edu/6744378/The\\_Epistemological\\_Function\\_of\\_Monsters\\_in\\_the\\_Middle\\_Ages\\_From\\_The\\_Voyage\\_of\\_Saint\\_Brendan\\_to\\_Herzog\\_Ernst\\_Marie\\_de\\_France\\_Marco\\_Polo\\_and\\_John\\_Mandeville\\_What\\_Would\\_We\\_Be\\_Without\\_Monsters\\_in\\_Past\\_and\\_Present](https://www.academia.edu/6744378/The_Epistemological_Function_of_Monsters_in_the_Middle_Ages_From_The_Voyage_of_Saint_Brendan_to_Herzog_Ernst_Marie_de_France_Marco_Polo_and_John_Mandeville_What_Would_We_Be_Without_Monsters_in_Past_and_Present) (last accessed on March 10, 2020).

**12** Katherine O’Brien O’Keefe, “Beowulf” (see note 11), 484–85.

**13** For a summary of scholarly opinions on the role of Unferth as *pyle*, see Robert E. Bjork, “Digressions and Episodes,” *A Beowulf Handbook*, ed. Robert E. Bjork and John D. Niles (Lincoln, NE, and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1997), 193–212; here 205–08.



Perhaps even more central to the concerns of the essay is the notion that Grendel “dwells at the gates of difference.”<sup>14</sup> With the exception of the following words from Hrothgar, readers are left to wonder exactly what Grendel must look like:

Ic þæt londbuend,	leode mine,
selerædende	secgan twegen
micle mearcstapan	moras healdan,
ellorgæstas.	þæra oðer wæs,
þæs þe hie gewislicost	gewitan meahton,
idese onlicnes;	oðer earmsceapen
on weres wæstmum	wræclastas træd,
næfne he wæs mara	þonne ænig man oðer;
þone on geardagum	Grendel nemdon
foldbuende.	(1345–51a)

[I heard say it the land dwellers,     my people,  
my hall counselors     (that) two  
huge march-stalkers     inhabiting the moors  
strange guests     of which one was  
from what they most certainly     could know  
a woman’s likeness,     the other a wretched person,  
in a man’s figure,     trod a wanderer’s footsteps,  
except that he was greater     than any other man,  
whom in days of old     was named Grendel  
by local folks.]

In one sense at this moment in their reading, observers are really no closer to understanding the Grendels and their history, except to suggest that they represent some long-enduring, extra-human form. Given that Hrothgar has ruled for fifty years and that he is noting the observations from a previous generation of Danes, these life forms are clearly older than he. They seem to exist in a mythic timelessness within time. Rather than complicating the language, they are simply described in the form of humans with a difference.

As Hrothgar continues, he includes additional legendary materials about parentage and location that are important for understanding the mystery that is necessary for Grendel’s identity:

<sup>14</sup> Cohen, *Monster Theory* (see note 6), 7.



that demons typically dwell in the fens, and that swamps are “important as a metaphor for evil.”<sup>19</sup> The description by the *Beowulf* poet characterizes the area that surrounds the mere where the Grendels live as desolate, except for some predatorial animals. There is also one additional idea that H. C. Darby developed in *The Medieval Fenland*: these swamplands are known as breeding grounds for diseases such as malaria and contribute to various forms of sickness.<sup>20</sup> Further, Darby observes that the fens were often populated both by reclusive monastic communities, and it was commonly the area to which “brigands and bandits” resorted.<sup>21</sup> In essence, a dual understanding of the land as both sacred and connected with evil was well established by the year 1000.<sup>22</sup> In one sense then, it would appear that the very landscape itself contributes to the ideological formation of the Grendels. They live in exactly the place that we might expect. They are indeed other and associated with various aspects that can contribute to plague and lawlessness.

What we have seen so far in developing the first four of Cohen’s maxims about monsters is that Grendel is located at several complex nexus points that are simply not easily resolvable. To keep Grendel and his Mother covered in ambiguity is important and part of the poet’s process of mystification that contributes to a complex understanding not only of the Grendels, but also of *Beowulf*. The final three of Cohen’s suggestions about monsters are deeply wound into the plot of the poem and will be examined in due course relative to those concepts.

## Earlier Critical Attempts to Characterize Grendel

Without question, J. R. R. Tolkien’s landmark essay entitled “*Beowulf*: The Monster and the Critics” set the basis for a study of the monsters in the poem as characters. In terms of literary criticism, Jodi-Ann George calls Tolkien’s essay an “important example of New Criticism.”<sup>23</sup> When Tolkien wrote his essay few

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<sup>19</sup> Justin T. Noetzel, “Monster, Demon, Warrior: St. Guthlac and the Cultural Landscape of the Anglo-Saxon Fens,” *Comitatus* 45 (2014): 105–32; see particularly 107–09.

<sup>20</sup> H. C. Darby, *The Medieval Fenland*, 2nd ed (1940; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 9.

<sup>21</sup> Darby, *The Medieval Fenland* (see note 20), 3–12.

<sup>22</sup> Darby, *The Medieval Fenland* (see note 20), 9.

<sup>23</sup> Jodi-Anne George, *Beowulf*. Readers’ Guide to Essential Criticism (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 39. The book provides a very well-developed sketch of the critical practices that scholars have engaged with since the nineteenth century in a study of the poem.

people accepted the poem as a serious literary artifice, but viewed it more as the property of the historian. But Tolkien was not interested in the linking of the poem as historical in the way of an historian, and in fact, he saw such things as the creation of the dragon as important bits of imagination that were likely tied in some sense with real-life struggles.<sup>24</sup> Further “the larger symbolism is near the surface, but it does not break through, nor become allegory.”<sup>25</sup> No doubt Tolkien would have been shocked by a host of readings by exegetical critics that were to follow in the middle of the twentieth century!

If we stick solely with the first part of the poem, we do not really have a clear sense of Grendel’s body, apart from a cultural memory description that Grendel is misshapen and larger than a human. Grendel is either a humanoid or a troll-like creature. In what must read to modern scholars like a quest following the nineteenth-century historical-critical methods that were applied to text such as *Beowulf* just as they were to the Hebrew Bible and New Testament, Friedrich Klaeber’s introduction of his edition of *Beowulf* shaped the imaginations of several generations of Old English readers. With respect to Grendel’s and Beowulf’s interactions, he suggests an oral tradition that produced poems as diverse as *Beowulf* and the Old Norse *Grettis Saga*. He connects Beow and Scyld of the opening genealogy with “the introduction of agriculture and civilization, the peaceful dwelling on a cultivated land.”<sup>26</sup> These suggestions, however, are based on the language itself, as Klaeber writes:

In similar mythological light are to be viewed the exploits of Beowulf (that is primarily, Beow). Grendel is a personification of the North Sea, and so is Grendel’s mother; and Beowulf’s fight against those demons symbolizes the successful checking of the inundations of the sea in the spring season. The contest with the dragon is its autumnal counterpart. In the death of the aged hero, which means the coming on of winter, an old-seasons-myth is seen to lie back of the prevailing culture-myth conception.<sup>27</sup>

Others have suggested that Grendel might be connected with plague particularly associated with marshy areas as noted earlier. The early Middle Ages records widespread evidence of plague, particularly around 664 C.E., and an Irish

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<sup>24</sup> J. R. R. Tolkien, “*Beowulf: The Monster and the Critics*,” *Interpretations of Beowulf: A Critical Anthology*, ed. R. D. Fulk (Bloomington and Indianapolis, IN: Indiana University Press, 1991), 14–44 (orig. 1936).

<sup>25</sup> Tolkien, “Beowulf: The Monster and the Critics” (see note 24), 16.

<sup>26</sup> Klaeber, “Introduction,” *Beowulf and the Fight at Finnsburg* (see note 1), xxiv.

<sup>27</sup> Klaeber, “Introduction,” *Beowulf and the Fight at Finnsburg* (see note 1), xxv.

text presents an image of plague as a kind of yellow-haired monster.<sup>28</sup> One can understand why there might have been a desire to personify or to put flesh on imaginary bones of a monster, such as a plague. It would be somewhat like the “invisible bullets” that killed native peoples in the Americas from diseases brought by the Europeans. No doubt, the *Beowulf* poet transforms the image of Grendel’s mere with the help of the Old English homiletic tradition, but the traditional association of stagnant bodies of water – such as where Grendel lives – would have potentially connected him with plague. The way thirty men die in one evening might actually be reminiscent of plague and its quick movement through a community. Readers, of course, will respond that Grendel has some kind of physical form, but the same traditions that represent plague in many classical texts will present them in terms of beings or animals. Megan Kate Nelson notes that such was the case with Pytho.<sup>29</sup> What seems certainly possible from this range of images is that Grendel may indeed have represented some kind of natural phenomena at one point, but in the hands of the *Beowulf* poet – perhaps aided with his knowledge of classical age literature and the epic in particular – the images became far more character-driven. Monsters just simply will not behave in the way that civilizations wish them to do so, as Cohen has demonstrated.

## Grendel and Cain and Location

The poet’s actual commentary on Grendel, of course, is built around the concept of etiology, a device found in classical-age literature and the book of Genesis, to describe certain phenomena. The poet writes:

wæs se grimma gæst	Grendel haten,
mære mearcstapa,	se þe moras heold,
fen ond fæsten;	fifelcynnes eard
wonsæli wer	weardode hwile,
sifðan him Scyppend	forscrifen hæfde
in Caines cynne—	þone cwealm gewræc
ece Drihten,	þæs þe he Abel slog;

<sup>28</sup> Charles Creighton, *A History of Epidemics in Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1891), 4–9.

<sup>29</sup> Megan Kate Nelson, “The Landscape of Disease: Swamps and Medical Discourse in the American Southeast 1800–1880,” *Mississippi Quarterly* 55.4 (2002): 535–67; here 547.

ne gefeah he þære fæhðe,      ac he hine foer forwær,       
Metod for þy mane      Mancynne fram. (102–10)

[This grim spirit                      was called Grendel,  
Mighty stalker on the marches,      who held the moors  
The fens and fastness;      this man of the race of monsters  
An unblessed man,      inhabited for a while  
After him the Creator      had condemned  
Among Cain's race –      when he killed Abel,  
The eternal Lord      avenged that death.  
No joy in that feud      but he him banished far  
The Maker for that crime,      from mankind.]

Then the poet continues with a mystification of Grendel's connection with Cain, thus establishing the ambiguous nature of how the poem will describe Grendel:

þanon untydras      ealle onwocon.  
Eotenas and ylfe      ond orcneas,  
Swylke gigantas,      þa wið Gode wunnon  
Lange þrage;      he him ðæs lean forgeald.

[From thence arose      all misbegotten things,  
Giants and elves      and monsters,  
Likewise giants      who warred against God  
For a long time.      He gave them their reward for that.]

When compared to possible analogues to the story in Old Norse literature, what emerges immediately is that the Beowulf poet is singular in connecting the story of Grendel with Cain, thus connecting it to a tradition of Christian interpretation and as a result throwing a symbolic narrative over what certainly was a narrative without such references. The literature that examines what Cain represents, of course, is myriad. It ranges from speculation that preaching from the Old Testament/Hebrew Bible demonstrates a tribal based culture would have been important for a Germanic tribal society.<sup>30</sup> This results in casting them as Germanic pagans in parallel to the Old Testament persons – hence pre-Christian. Christopher M. Cain suggests that “the poet deliberately parallels the pagan Germanic past with the pre-Christian world of the Old Testament with the aim of demonstrating the prefiguration of the Christian world in his native

<sup>30</sup> See Oliver T. Emerson, “Legends of Cain, Especially in Old and Middle English,” *PMLA* 21.4 (1906): 831–929; Heidi Estes, “Raising Cain the Genesis and Beowulf,” *Heroic Age* 13 (2010): unpaginated (online at: <https://www.heroicage.org/issues/13/estes.php>; last accessed on Jan. 23, 2020).

heritage just as it was demonstrated in the world of the old dispensation with the Hebrews.”<sup>31</sup> Such a characterization accords with Fred Robinson’s notion of accommodation between the original pre-Christian world of the poem and its Christian narrator.<sup>32</sup>

What would seem more readily apparent is that the writer would have the Augustinian image of the city of God and city of man in mind, with Cain being the founder of the earthly city characterized by strife. At the same time, the references to Cain’s kin provide additional layers to some other dimensions that complicate the portrait of Grendel. The poet does use the words “wonsaeli wer” (105; unhappy man) to describe him even after he had called him a “grimma gæst” (102; grim spirit), thus blurring our description with the poet’s own overdetermined vocabulary that is typical of the characterization of both Grendel and his mother. From the area where Grendel and Cain are connected then emerges the world of trolls, elves, and the living dead. Again, the lines between the human and the non-human are blurred. What should be clear, however, is that none of the characters in the poem is aware of these associations. The poet is fighting a war with Grendel on the religious plane, which the actual event suggests more than *Grettis Saga*. That the exchanging of horses occurs in *Beowulf* as a pledge of winnings and that the troll in *Grettis Saga* eats horses is probably not a coincidence. They are part of the cultural landscape of wealth and exchange. The eating of humans on Grendel’s part is likely related to other associations that we must explore. As Jeffrey Jerome Cohen notes, “Grendel represents a cultural Other for whom conformity with societal dictates is an impossibility because those dictates are not comprehensible to him; he is at the same time a monstrous version of what a member of society can become when the dictates are rejected.”<sup>33</sup> Thus it is hardly a wonder that ambiguity reigns even at the level of the verbal.

The phrase “mære mearcstapa” (103) typically translates as “mighty or famous walker of the marshes.” Certainly, Grendel had likely earned that reputation in Danish society, both before and after his attacks on Heorot. What may be disguised in the word “mære” deserves direct attention. In an article in *Modern Philology* by Nicolas K. Kiessling that has not received a great deal of attention, the author suggests that it is impossible to know whether the diphthong in “mære” is

31 Christopher M. Cain, “Beowulf, The Old Testament, and the *Regula Fidei*,” *Renascence* 49.4 (1997): 227–40; here 228.

32 Fred C. Robinson, *Beowulf and the Appositive Style* (Knoxville, TN: University of Tennessee Press, 1985).

33 Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, *Of Giants: Sex, Monsters, and The Middle Ages*. Medieval Cultures, 17 (Minneapolis, MN, and London: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), 26.

actually short or long as it is often not designed. Certainly, the tradition has been to translate “mære” with a long diphthong as “famous” and with a short diphthong as “incubus, night monster.”<sup>34</sup> This article traces the history of the term back to its Indo-European and Latin roots and connects it with terms such as incubus and “eoton” (706) – giant – and “aglæca” (monster, wretch, or fiend). The term “mære” probably was connected with the idea of “a crusher, a troublemaker, or a waster.”<sup>35</sup> In later times, the suggestion is that it probably had to do with nightmares. If the idea is connected with incubus, a range of possibilities of meaning rises more quickly and leaves us with some very intriguing ideas about the nature of the Danish court and perhaps its own anxieties. By tradition, the incubus (male) or succubus (female) was associated with sexual crimes.<sup>36</sup>

Is it possible to push beyond Kiessling’s proposition? After noting the possibility of sexual crimes or sexual action in general, he observes none in *Beowulf*. One of the things that many readers note about *Beowulf* is that intimacy is not a frequently observed term. In fact, when Hrothgar does retire to his queen’s bedchamber (665; “cwen to gebeddan”), there is the potential for reading in this statement a loss of the masculine hegemonic ideal. Is the poet worried about the specific way in which masculinity is performed in the poem with the queen’s bedchamber reference? As with so many of the poet’s one- or two-word associations, there are only hints. Grendel consumes a person completely – as the poem notes “feet and fingertips.” He apparently gains power over his prey and thus subdues them. In one real sense, Grendel’s power has been a check on masculine pride, even by those who have met in counsel about how to defeat him. We, however, see no action. The associations, whether related to a particular time of day when Grendel attacks or to a suggestion that his attack contains some kind of sexually sublimated power, underline not only his methods – and the poet’s assumptions about his mental intentions – but also complicate the representation of Grendel even further. He may come under the fog and clouds of night, but his identity is even more uncharted and indescribable.

Readers have also been fascinated by a reference to a glove that Grendel wears. In describing Grendel’s attack on Beowulf in the mead hall, he recounts to Hygelac, upon his return that

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34 Nicholas Kiessling, “Grendel: A New Aspect,” *Modern Philology* 65.3 (1968): 191–201; here 191. For a more developed study in masculinity in medieval literature, see Daniel F. Pigg “Masculinity Studies,” *Handbook of Medieval Studies: Terms – Methods – Trends*, ed. Albrecht Classen (Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2010), 1: 829–35.

35 Kiessling, “Grendel” (see note 34), 194.

36 Kiessling, “Grendel” (see note 34), 199–201.



	Glof hangode
sid ond syllic, searobendum fæst;	
sio wæs orðoncum	eall gegyrwed
deofles cræftum	ond dracon fellum.
He mec þær on innan	unsynningne,
dior dædfruma	gedon wolde
manigra sumne;	hyt ne mihte swa,
syððan ic on yrr	uppriht astod. (2085b–92)
	[A glove hung
Large and strange,	fast with cunningly wrought clasps;
It was embroidered	all with evil skill,
With the devil's craft	and dragon's skins.
He me there on [the] inside,	though [I was] unsinning,
That proud evil-doer	intended to put me,
One of many;	[but] it might not be so,
After I in anger	stood upright.]

The identify of “Glof” (2085b) has intrigued scholars, for this seems more than something merely to cover a hand. In fact, if that were the case, such an identification would factor into human-like qualities for Grendel. Edward D. Laborde suggested that the glove is likely similar to those known in Old Norse literature and carried by trolls.<sup>37</sup> Drawing on the work of James L. Rosier who noted the many puns in this section of the poem with the words hand and glove,<sup>38</sup> Seth Lerer suggests that there really is no glove at all, but it is merely a poetic device that develops in the retelling of the event. It allows for a more heroic kind of escape for Beowulf.<sup>39</sup> Andrew M. Pfrenger suggests that it might actually be an illusion to Grendel's stomach instead, but that would be ironic.<sup>40</sup>

The diversity of opinions here has a certain merit, for Beowulf is indeed an engaging storyteller – even like the poet himself who weaves imagery in a way to create effect. At the same time, however, the glove suggests a literal thing. In the encounter with Grendel on the fateful night, there is no mention of a glove that Grendel brings along. Folk epics, however, allow the addition of material as events are retold. That seems more likely here. While the story may be told

37 Edward D. Laborde, “Grendel's Glove and His Immunity from Weapons,” *Modern Language Review* 18 (1923): 202–04.

38 James L. Rosier, “The Uses of Association: Hands and Feasts in Beowulf,” *PMLA* 78 (1963): 8–14.

39 Seth Lerer, “Grendel's Glove,” *English Literary History* 61.4 (1994): 721–51.

40 Andrew M. Pfrenger, “Grendel's Glof: Beowulf Line 2085 Reconsidered,” *Philological Quarterly* 87.3–4 (2008): 209–35.

for a certain kind of humor,<sup>41</sup> it is also true that Grendel has been previously represented as demonic. Hence the glove with those verbal markers simply suggests something more sinister here as a degenerate human or humanoid.

That Beowulf unlike others during Grendel's twelve-year reign of terror on the fateful night survives highlights his skill perhaps. Beowulf's retelling of the swimming match with Breca had already shown his ability to escape unlikely circumstances and to win in such unlikely competitions. At the same time, that in no way negates the possibility that Grendel's glove is simply another mark of his terror. One gets the sense that he would capture as many men as he can for perhaps a later gourmet dining on human flesh. The glove thus ties together several different identifying markers: troll, a giant who is able to control other giants if we compare it to Old Norse materials, associations with the demonic, and an example of unchecked desire. Finally, a glove is an explicit reference to human culture, which makes this monster even more terrifying since it somehow seems to be related to the human species. One is tempted to pun with the image which fits together hand in glove with Grendel.

## The Deep Matrix of Monstrosity

Finally, a comparison between the later *Grettis Saga* and *Beowulf* that seems to arise out of the same cultural and oral tradition matrix can help us to establish more about Grendel. Magnús Fjalldal examines various theories that have been postulated since the nineteenth century relative to the relationship between the earlier *Beowulf* and the later *Grettis saga*, concluding that there is no clear connection.<sup>42</sup> The problem, of course, seems to be that he is expecting some kind of common source behind them. It would seem he suggests a kind of common written source.<sup>43</sup> On the surface, that can simply be rejected given that the legend behind the poem *Beowulf* is always spoken of as something heard. As can be seen by the following description of the later poem, oral developments of stories need not cohere, but can rearrange the entire patterns of relationships at times between characters. In *Beowulf*, Grendel's attack on the hall seems to

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<sup>41</sup> Lerer, "Grendel's Glove" (see note 39), 721–23.

<sup>42</sup> Magnús Fjalldal, *The Long Arm of Coincidence: The Frustrated Connection between Beowulf and Grettis Saga* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998).

<sup>43</sup> Fjalldal, *The Long Arm of Coincidence* (see note 42), 116.

be motivated by sound coming from inside.<sup>44</sup> He attacks and in one evening kills thirty hall retainers and, on the second evening, even more. He has stopped the sounds of merriment in the hall, and he rules the hall in the evenings. When challenged by Beowulf, he discovers he meets his symbolic match with a man whose handgrip has that of thirty men's strength. Before Grendel flees the hall, he leaves behind his arm and shoulder. In Beowulf's retelling of the story in Hygelac's court, Grendel leaves behind this ominous glove that is probably like a bag used by trolls in Old Norse literature – a bag in which he would carry men away to eat them as has been noted. Beowulf ultimately defeats Grendel by decapitation once he has found his corpse in the mother's cave.

In *Grettis Saga*, Thornhall, a farmer, hires Glam, who is killed, but his spirit does not rest in grace so he is seen as walking as a revenant through the village. Grettir, on learning of his nighttime behavior, approaches Thornhall and then pursues Glam. Glam eats Grettir's horse. In an epic-like battle Grettir kills Glam after Glam delivers a long speech. Grettir is given gifts by Thornhall for his defeat of Glam. The lack of allegory in the Old Norse story is readily apparent; and the less ambiguous description of Glam is also present. Gift giving details are very similar to *Beowulf*.

That Glam speaks while Grendel does not suggests a less ambiguous description of the monster than in *Beowulf*. Glam is clearly a person, although among the undead. Working in the same tradition, the writers obviously intended to use these stories for very different purposes, but comparing the two shows the way that the *Beowulf* poet has an implicit religious and political agenda to propose in his presentation of Grendel.<sup>45</sup> The ideology implicit in the Old Norse narrative is less clear, even if it too was composed in a period after the coming of Christianity to that region of Scandinavia. Grendel becomes the marker to suggest that indeed something is “rotten in the state of Denmark,” and even the statecraft of good king Hrothgar or Wealhtheow cannot solve the problem.<sup>46</sup> The *Beowulf* poet is clearly more articulate in the use of precise language than the Old Norse writer who complexifies identities. What may well be

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<sup>44</sup> See now the contributions to *Lautsphären des Mittelalters: Akustische Perspektiven zwischen Lärm und Stille*, ed. Martin Clauss, Gesine Mierke, and Antonia Krüger. Beihefte zum Archiv für Kulturgeschichte, 89 (Vienna, Cologne, and Weimar: Böhlau, 2020), though neither early medieval literature nor *Beowulf* specifically are addressed here.

<sup>45</sup> For a point by point comparison between related portions of the narratives, see Magnús Fjalldal, *The Long Arm of Coincidence* (see note 42), 119–29.

<sup>46</sup> The implications of Denmark as a place with considerable moral corruption has been explored in a helpful way by Fidel Fajardo-Acosta, “Intemperance, Fratricide, and the Elusiveness of Grendel,” *English Studies* 73.3 (1992): 205–10. His reading is instructive on intemperance in particular. The current reading though follows a darker reading of the Grendel/Beowulf connection.

true is that rather than a common written source, it might have been a common oral source behind the tradition that produced each literary text.

## Conclusion

Grendel fascinates readers because he is dark, ambiguous, manipulative, and seemingly impossible to control. Whether he is the personification of plague or some type of natural phenomena such as the sea or some type of degenerate human, as indicated by his glove, Grendel is a verbal creation of a poet whose descriptions are not consistent. Assuming that the poet knew what he was doing with his use of details – and that is a reasonable likelihood – the ambiguity is important in shaping the images of menace and monstrosity. From the descriptions of Grendel found both in the first and in the second portion of the poem – Beowulf’s retelling of the fight scene with Grendel – readers/listeners sense the terror of the overdetermined verbal imagery. Keeping the readers and hearers guessing about the nature of Grendel is important to understanding how Beowulf is the only person who can possibly defeat him. They are verbally matched in addition to the use of the number thirty as a kind of folkloric parallel related to their strength. The word “aglæca” solidifies the connection. Indeed, verbally speaking, Beowulf thus bears some of the same marks of Grendel, which explains why he has to die as well, and which would finally make the return of the monstrous impossible.<sup>47</sup> In that way, the *Beowulf* poet deconstructs the world of the heroic and commits it to history as the gold was committed to the ground in Beowulf’s burial where it is useless as it ever was. Seen also in the context of similar myths between Old English and Old Norse texts that are several hundred years apart in their written forms, the stories of Grendel and Glam show poets who are moving from isolating figures that are mysterious to those that are more definitive in form. For the *Beowulf* poet, that ambiguity is central to meaning as it is also central for defining the nature of deep-seated challenges that are as close as Unferth who sits at the feet of Hrothgar in Heorot or as close as the genealogies that depict brother killing brother. Beowulf may indeed have defeated the monstrous opponent in Heorot and decapitated Grendel in the the Grendels’ underwater cave, yet what he represents lives on to plague the worlds of the Danes and the Geats.

Scenes of feasting are normative in *Beowulf*, and the warriors’ merriment sets up a kind of melancholy tone as the poet is always aware of the fate that

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<sup>47</sup> See Albrecht Classen, “The Epistemological Function of Monsters” (see note 11).

awaits, especially for those fated to die on the evening of the Grendels' attacks on Heorot. That even the feasting scenes in Heorot contain the seeds of chaos represented by Grendel is apparent. Unferth sits by and challenges; even Heorot seems fated for destruction at the moment when the poet celebrates its being built. Ingeld, Hrothgar's son-in-law, is another representative of those who betray. Grendel is thus a part of this more than subtle landscape. He is part of the contradictions that hold the world of the Danes and Geats together, and he is an emblem that in the end – even a kind of eschatological end that is both pre-Christian and Christian – all persons and events move toward a conclusion wrapped in ambiguity and pregnant with meaning.



Warren Tormey

# Otherworldly Pilgrims: The Hell Tour and the Establishment of (Continental) Christian Territoriality on the Anglo-Saxon and Irish Peripheries

Devils, demons, and vaguely demonic monsters were key players in Anglo-Saxon and Irish patristic literature, serving in the larger formation of the Christian imagination and cultural identity in the eighth through the tenth century and beyond. Within this larger narrative, these otherworldly figures played key roles in “Hell Tour” accounts and thereby facilitated a process of “othering” that was integral to the unsteady and halting embrace of Anglo-Irish Christianity at its outermost reaches.

In scriptural accounts Christ himself encounters vaguely demonic otherworldly beings during His otherworld tour, as chronicled in I Peter and Ephesians 4, and hinted at less directly in Revelation. Here the “harrowing journey” portrays the Savior’s endurance across a process of exposure, trial, and choice to determine and reinforce his “elect” status. The resonance of this underworld journey motif is codified and popularized in the underworld hell tours portrayed in the Apocryphal *Visio* tradition, particularly in the *Visio S. Pauli* narratives popular among the Anglo-Saxons. Whether identified in biblical or apocryphal terms as the “Harrowing of Hell” narrative or in equally tangible terms as the “Underworld Vision,” or more simply, the “Hell Tour,” these otherworld journeys depict emerging patterns of demonic motifs that have allowed scholars to discern processes of transmission from pre-Old Testament paganism to early patristic traditions. Hell tour motifs served patristic writers on the peripheries of the expanding Christian world as an othering template in multiple ways – as a supernatural frontier borderland and boundary, a demarcation of imaginative borders, and as an important construct and vocabulary to distinguish the Continental Christian “self” and the non- (or imperfectly) Christian “other” during the conversion-era transitions across England and Ireland between the eighth and tenth centuries.

In its varied iterations the hell tour functions as a suitable trope for an expanding Christian culture and community at its borders and frontiers, as the underworld pilgrim first survives demonic encounters under the guidance of an

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Warren Tormey, Middle Tennessee State University, USA.

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escort/guide/protector figure who facilitates the pilgrim's path to otherworldly knowledge, and enables his return to testify to the distinctions between the elect believers ("us") and the condemned and tormented apostates ("them"). To that end, the hell tour serves an imaginative and ethical purpose within a larger process of establishing a culture's "territoriality," or the means by which it gradually acquires social control over remote or otherwise contested geographical spaces.<sup>1</sup> As a literary trope, the hell tour helps to reflect and solidify a culture's

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<sup>1</sup> Borderland theory has deep roots within the scholarly tradition as well, as does the psychology of constructions of self vs. other and theories about the negotiation of spaces and the construction of imaginative otherworlds. Here are included just a handful of resources which provide a theoretical justification for my argument. To begin, I employ the definition of "territoriality" as a process of imposing boundaries, borders, and value systems upon indeterminate landscapes, as supplied by Alexander C. Diener and Joshua Hagan, *Borders: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 4–6. Here, the authors define this concept as "the means by which humans create, communicate, and control geographical spaces, either through some social or political entity ... [T]erritoriality and practices of bordering are neither constant nor consistent but rather highly contingent and adaptable ... Territoriality thereby ... (drives) the process of defining what is 'ours' in opposition to what is 'theirs.' ... As manifestations of territoriality, borders provide a means to assign things to particular spaces and regulate access into and/or out of specific areas." Additionally, see the discussion explaining the concept of territoriality by Robert D. Sack, *Human Territoriality: Its Theory and History*. Cambridge Studies in Historical Geography, 7 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), especially 5–27. Also useful for my argument is the discussion about symbolic boundaries offered by Michéle Lamont and Virág Molnár in their article "The Study of Boundaries in the Social Sciences," *Annual Review of Sociology* 28 (2002): 167–95; here 168–69. The authors describe the "symbolic resources (e.g., conceptual distinctions, interpretive strategies, cultural traditions) in creating, maintaining, contesting, or even dissolving institutionalized social differences (e.g., class, gender, race, territorial inequality)." Within this nexus of currents, they distinguish between symbolic and social boundaries, defining the former as the "conceptual distinctions made by social actors to categorize objects, people, practices, and even time and space. They are tools by which individuals and groups struggle over and come to agree upon definitions of reality. Examining them allows us to capture the dynamic dimensions of social relations, as groups compete in the production, diffusion, and institutionalization of alternative systems and principles of classifications. Symbolic boundaries also separate people into groups and generate feelings of similarity and group membership. They are an essential medium through which people acquire status and monopolize resources." Beginning with this definition, the authors then describe the relationship between symbolic and social boundaries, identifying both as "equally real" and writing that "[o]nly when symbolic boundaries are widely agreed upon can they take on a constraining character and pattern social interaction in important ways. Moreover, only then can they become social boundaries, i.e., translate, for instance, into identifiable patterns of social expression or class or racial segregation." Working within the realm of sociology, Lamont and Molnár offer an overview of recent scholarship which builds on these fundamental distinctions. Both definitions serve well to shape this the popularity and appropriation of harrowing narratives and hell tours within the larger



hegemonic values within a climate of competing ideologies or of transforming value systems, competition over disputed borders or boundaries, or within other climates of indeterminacy. Peter Dendle suggests that the Anglo-Saxon conception of the demonic is defined by that indeterminacy: in those fluid and obscure distinctions between the Devil and the “mere” demon; between the landscapes of this terrestrial world and the ephemeral underworld; between the corporeality of the sinner and the external impulse to sin; and, ultimately, within the ill-defined “fluid boundaries” of the “devil figure” which confirm his otherness. Whether in the form of the Devil himself or within a cadre of demonic subordinates, the strength of that power rests in its “simultaneous existence ontological as well as hermeneutical domains” which “call into question the permanence of the tangible world.”<sup>2</sup> My intention therefore is to focus on the purposeful implications of the hell tour motif, as inspired and influenced by the *Visio S. Pauli* and the writings of Gregory the Great, which helped to define boundaries in climates of indeterminacy on the edges of Continental Christian territoriality. I focus specifically on three texts, each of which includes versions of the Hell Tour, the otherworld sojourn that provides a means of defining and strengthening the imaginative coordinates and boundaries between self and other and ultimately stabilizes the ethos of Mediterranean Christianity in its most contested and peripheral spaces, those across the indeterminate landscapes and frontiers of conversion-era Anglo-Saxon-era England and Ireland.<sup>3</sup>

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social, spiritual, and political climate of “conversion era” Anglo-Saxon and Anglo-Irish literature across the eighth and ninth centuries. For additional resources specific to the formation of territories and boundaries in the medieval period, see Robert Bartlett, *The Making of Europe: Conquest, Colonization, and Cultural Change, 950–1350* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994); and more recently, *Monasteries on the Borders of Medieval Europe: Conflict and Cultural Integration*, ed. Emilia Jamroziak and Karen Stöber. *Medieval Church Studies*, 28 (Turnhout: Brepols Publishers 2013).

2 See Peter Dendle, *Satan Unbound: The Devil in Old English Narrative Literature* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001), especially 63–81, 87–94; here 103.

3 It is appropriate here to distinguish the motif of the “hell tour,” in its various patristic iterations, with another, one emerging from classical epic, closely related but ultimately distinct: that of *katabasis* (catabasis). This term refers to the underworld journey undertaken by Homeric and Virgilian epic heroes and adapted by later writers including Dante, Spenser, and Milton. In these journeys the heroes, most distinctly Ulysses and Aeneas, revisit key figures in their past lives and seek clarity about their future mandates. Within this stage of the epic narrative the concept of demonic is muted, less articulated, and, though no less essential to the outcome of the narrative, defined ultimately by its heightened degrees of moral ambiguity. A narrative motif of a comparable category, the catabatic journey remains distinct from the hell tour traditions of the *Apocrypha*, the *Visio*, and the *Saints’ Lives*. See Warren Tormey, “The Journey within the Journey: *Catabasis* and Travel Narrative in Late Medieval and Early Modern

Within the shared spaces where proto-Christian and pagan influences intertwined, poets and chroniclers syncretized disparate worlds, exploring the imaginative dimensions of seemingly otherworldly boundaries and borderlands as the frontiers of Christian belief hesitantly expanded and as a more fully articulated conception of the demonic likewise gradually supplanted a vaguer, more generalized version of monstrousness. The *Wanderer* and *Seafarer* of Anglo-Saxon vernacular poetry (both from the *Exeter Book* and dated to the later tenth century) capture this less rigid conception of the monstrous with each poem articulating the eternal themes of dislocation, loss, and temporality, communicating each speaker's unsteady positioning between disparate worlds, and thus portraying an early moment in this clarifying process. Here, in shifting narrative perspectives, nameless and disconnected narrative voices confront no monsters or demons directly. Instead, they confront existential terrors, offering visions of remembered communities and former relationships existing now only in memory. In this way both poems engage with the psychological trauma of loss, exile, aging, and isolation in a once-familiar but now liminal landscape, overtly forbidding if not vaguely demonic. Each portrays a lost world defined by memory and nostalgia, one existing between this world and the next under the faintest of Christian auspices, seemingly without borders or fixed coordinates and terrifying in its indeterminacy. Less directly, *The Dream of the Rood* (*Vercelli Book*, also dated to the later tenth century) likewise offers a syncretic vision of Germanic pagan and proto-Christian ethos, both distant and disturbing, portraying both the bloody violence of Christ's passion (with its implicitly monstrous overtones) and the awe and grandeur, and perhaps even the otherworldly terror, of His ascension. Here, the graphic violence of the Crucifixion conjoins with the themes of warfare and combat familiar to a pre-Christian *thegn* serving within his *comitatus* in a dream vision defined by its unbounded indeterminacy and conjoining of disparate worlds.

As both Edward Currie and Daniel Pigg establish elsewhere in this volume, *Beowulf* likewise captures this sense of indeterminacy with monstrous associations in vivid and varied forms. The former explores the origins of the monstrous character of the advice given in the poem's Ingeld episode, while the latter reveals how the poem reflects Anglo-Saxon conceptions of a monstrous "other" in describing Grendel in various worldly and otherworldly forms – anthropomorphic versions of fog, plague, troll, or some other amorphous fenland form – ultimately, as a crisis

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Epic," *Travel, Time, and Space in the Middle Ages and Early Modern Time: Explorations of World Perceptions and Process of Identity Formation*, ed. Albrecht Classen. *Fundamentals of Early Modern Culture*, 21 (Berlin and Boston: Walter de Gruyter, 2018), 585–621.

in boundaries made manifest in chaos at the edges of social order, and so as a threat to the health, stability, and identity of the Danes and their community.

Pigg's argument implies that if the *Beowulfian* utopia resides at Heorot, amidst the storytelling, feasting, and celebrations of warrior loyalty and noble lineage, its cultural "other," embodied in the overtly monstrous figure of Grendel (and later, Grendel's mother and the hoard-guarding dragon fifty years later) represents an important complement as well as an existential threat to that ethos, seeking to disrupt this temporal and utopian vision and testing the heroic codes that maintain it.<sup>4</sup> In its entirety, the poem combines the disparate influences of the classical, scriptural, Germanic, and contemporary worlds, also contrasting an emerging Christian ethos with a starker, more monstrous, more primal "other," one approaching a vision of the demonic.<sup>5</sup> The narrative

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4 In his iconic "Beowulf: The Monsters and Critics" essay, J. R. R. Tolkien hints at the vague character of the demonic within the poem, suggesting that its monsters are "fundamentally allied to the underlying ideas of the poem, which give it its lofty tone and high seriousness," with "those very references to Cain which have often been used as a stick to beat an ass – taken as an evident sign (were any needed) of the muddled heads of the early Anglo Saxons." Tolkien later (and more charitably) explains the bifurcating functions of the *Beowulfian* monstrous, observing that "Grendel is not yet a real mediaeval devil" and distinguishing between a "devilish ogre" and "a devil revealing himself in ogre form." See J. R. R. Tolkien, "Beowulf: The Monsters and the Critics," *An Anthology of Beowulf Criticism*, ed. Lewis E. Nicolson (South Bend, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1963, rpt. 1964, 1966, 1971), 51–103; here 68 and 91; published originally in *Proceedings of the British Academy XXII* [1936], 245–95). More recently (and more directly), Paul Freedman, "The Medieval Other: The Middle Ages as Other," *Marvels, Monsters, and Miracles: Studies in the Medieval and Early Modern Imaginations*, ed. Timothy S. Jones and David A. Sprunger. *Studies in Medieval Culture*, XII (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, 2002), 1–24; here 2, also remarks on the importance of othering capacities inherent in the descent from Cain. Observing that in the slow path toward Christian ecumenism, Freedman explains that the monstrous served as "descendants of cursed progenitors, notably Cain, whose notorious mark was interpreted as some deformity transmitted with the subsequent variations of his progeny." Freedman also cites the seminal work of John Block Friedman, whose *Monstrous Races in Medieval Art and Thought* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1981) serves as a seminal resource within this research category. Both resources assert that within the Anglo-Saxon patristic tradition, monsters and demons replaced a more ambiguous form of pre- (or proto-) Christian evil, captured in the figures of the elf, the fairy, the ogre, and the troll, thereby strengthening the boundaries between the Christian and pagan domains which were gradually taking shape, and also serving as counterpoints for the inculcation of transforming social, moral, behavioral codes.

5 On the symbolism of *Beowulfian* fenlands, see also: Rod Giblett, "Theology of Wetlands: Tolkien and *Beowulf* on Marshes and their Monsters," *Green Letters: Studies in Ecocriticism* 19.2 (2015): 132–43; here 136 (online at: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/14688417.2015.1019910>; last accessed on Jan. 25, 2020). The author discusses Grendel and his mother as monstrous representations of otherness against which "Christianity asserted its dominance in England over the

of *Beowulf* thus serves also to capture a moment in the long path of assimilation by which the weighty corpus of inherited scriptural and apocryphal iconography conjoined with pre-Christian Germanic motifs to provide Anglo-Saxon Christian writers with a substantial collection of images and tropes with which to craft an “othering” discourse that associated generalized conceits of monstrousness with more overtly demonic associations and motifs as it proliferated on the Celtic, Mercian, and Northumbrian peripheries in the eighth, ninth, and tenth centuries, and as Continental Christianity slowly accommodated and engaged with the frontier populations during the conversion era.

Writing first in Latin and later in vernacular, Anglo-Saxon and Irish monastic writers refined an extended habit inherited from pre-Christian Norse, Germanic, and Celtic traditions, adapting that vaguer conception of the monstrous, reshaping it with more demonic associations, and syncretizing it with patristic literary forms. Among them, the Venerable Bede, the otherwise obscure cleric Felix, and the anonymous Latin writer(s) of the oft-translated *Navigatio Sancti Brendani Abbatis*, as well as the poetic chroniclers of the vernacular *Guthlac* materials, supplemented those traditions with enhanced visions of the demonic as modeled as much as on the hell tour motifs of the apocryphal *Visio S. Pauli* tradition as by the proselytizing imagery described in the writings of Pope Gregory the Great. The Fursa and Drythelm episodes in Bede’s *Ecclesiastical History* (731 C.E.), Felix’s roughly contemporary *Life of Saint Guthlac*, and the proliferating iterations of the *Navigatio Sancti Brendani Abbatis* (of the later ninth, tenth, and eleventh centuries) likewise portray versions of the otherworld hell tour at key narrative junctures, thus serving in and facilitating the formation of Christian cultural and social identity in the northern frontiers of Northumbria in the fenlands of Mercia – the Saxon frontiers of the eighth-century world – and on the Celtic, Germanic, Nordic fringes in later ninth and beyond. Within these contested and indeterminate landscapes, an “othering” discourse emerged as conceptions of a Continental Christian cultural hegemony slowly took shape,<sup>6</sup>

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sacrality of swamps” by “condemning wetlands as hell, as a place of monsters, the basis for later draining and ‘reclaiming’ them.”

<sup>6</sup> In the Introduction to his *Medieval Identity Machines* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2003), xxiii, Jeffrey Jerome Cohen comments on the process of adapting distinctive and disparate social, cultural, political, and gender identities, as reflected in select works, into this more coherent vision of the Christian self, defined not according to masculine codes of warfare but by the communal (and where appropriate, ascetic) ethos of monasticism: “[w]hat unites the disparate medieval bodies that *Medieval Identity Machines* collects is an insistence that subjectivity is always enfleshed; that human identity is – despite the best efforts of those who possess it to assert otherwise – unstable, contingent, hybrid, discontinuous; that the work of creating a human body is never finished; that gender, race, sexuality, and nation

refined by evolving associations between the monstrous and the demonic and enabled, shaped and prompted by the motifs of the hell tour narrative and the associated otherworld visions of scriptural and apocryphal *Visio* traditions. Charles D. Wright describes the various iterations of the apocryphal work as providing a key thematic linkage between Anglo-Saxon and Irish traditions, noting first how “[t]he Old English adaptations of motifs from the *Visio S. Pauli* ... reflect the important role of Anglo-Saxon England in the early history and transmission of the apocalypse,” and also how this work “exerted a profound influence on Irish visionary texts,”<sup>7</sup> including the *Navigatio*. Emerging from within Judeo-Christian Mediterranean culture from the third century onward, hell tour motifs served likewise on the fringes of the Anglo-Saxon and Anglo-Irish worlds some four centuries later as early monastics pushed the boundaries, encountered the limitations of their Christian identities, and sought to establish hegemonic beliefs and faith practices within those borderland regions and frontiers.

The harrowing narrative, the other/underworld vision, the tour of hell are concepts used synonymously within the current context, and the motifs of these narrative forms influenced audiences in multiple ways, delighting with their horrifying look at the otherworld but also inscribing communal codes of behavior, reinventing outdated concepts of heroism, clarifying the character of transgression, and reinforcing the urgency of communal commitments to Christian-centered social norms. In her influential 1983 study, *The Fate of the Dead*, Martha Himmelfarb notes a “kind of continuity”<sup>8</sup> in the motif of the tour of hell and also considers its social dimensions. In the tours of hell discussed by Himmelfarb, the rewards and indulgences enjoyed in this life prefigure the punishments and torments in the underworld according to a system of “measure for measure.” The elect, punished and martyred in this life, enjoy their bliss in the next according to a process of mirroring, in which we see the “othering” functions of early Christianity. Beyond

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are essential but not sufficiently definitive components of this production.” To this end, the construction of the self is intimately connected with the construction of the other, and thus the hell tour exposes the pilgrim to that border where the Christian self and the less identifiable, less reputable, or non-(or heretical) Christian other are distinguished and separated.

<sup>7</sup> Charles D. Wright, *The Irish Tradition in Old English Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 108–09. Michael Baker, “‘Now Flying over the Hell Mouth’: The Gap between St. Guðlac and Nordic Volcano Imagery,” *Postgraduate English* 38 (Spring 2019), ed. Aalia Ahmed and Lucia Scigliano (online at: <http://community.dur.ac.uk/postgraduate.english/ojs/index.php/pgenglish/issue/view/44>; last accessed on Jan. 25, 2020), also situates the Fursa, Drythelm, and Guthlac accounts within the *Visio* tradition, even as he focuses most directly on the distinctively Nordic features of the landscape imagery in Felix’s account.

<sup>8</sup> Martha Himmelfarb, *Tours of Hell: An Apocalyptic Form in Jewish and Christian Literature* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1983; Fortress Press, 1985), 1.

Himmelfarb's arguments that such "demonstrative explanations"<sup>9</sup> provide shape and structure to the tour of hell, they also serve a self-identifying function to distinguish the elect from the condemned and to reinforce social codes within a defined hegemonic ethos. Patterned after Christ's journey through the underworld, these accounts reinforce the boundaries between the virtuous pilgrim literally "saved" by his sanctified, otherworld guide and the condemned, backsliding, imperfectly Christian (or pagan) "other," a distinction essential to the process of conversion within a growing but hesitantly emerging Christian culture.<sup>10</sup>

In *The Fate of the Dead: Studies on the Jewish and Christian Apocalypse*, Richard Bauckham builds on Himmelfarb's work, examining a full field of otherworldly harrowing journeys while focusing most directly on those within the Apocryphal tradition that expand upon and elucidate traditional scriptural imagery.<sup>11</sup> Considering both the character of the punishments imposed upon sinners in relation to the sins they committed, and the spatial geography of these underworld landscapes witnessed by various pilgrims, Bauckham also considers the evolution of these images from pre-Christian and later, Old Testament motifs into their apocryphal iterations, also offering a full inventory of the genre's most iconic motifs and images. Beyond the various scriptural references to the wastelands of Gehenna and the "harrowing" journeys undertaken by Christ<sup>12</sup> which provide a field of otherworld visions, the accounts

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9 Himmelfarb, *Tours* (see note 8), 67.

10 Himmelfarb, *Tours* (see note 8), 67.

11 Richard Bauckham, *The Fate of the Dead: Studies on the Jewish and Christian Apocalypse*. Supplements to Novum Testamentum, 93 (Leiden, Boston, and Cologne: Brill, 1998).

12 Despite Bede's valorization of Aidan and the Irish traditions he represented, the doctrinal alignment with Continental Roman Catholicism was believed to offer stronger ethical and institutional footing to legitimize the fledgling and, in those early decades, perpetually unsteady English church, which was tinged by doctrinal controversies especially disputes over tonsure, the date of Easter, and the taint of Pelagianism and perpetually prone to backsliding toward heresy and Paganism. In concert with the Virgilian underworld, the primal salvation drama, modeled in the Old Testament and more directly patterned after Christ's example, was likewise of paramount concern to the early medieval English writers who similarly found precedent for the portrayals of demonic spaces resonating throughout scripture, for example, in the many "harrowing" episodes which depict Christ's descent into and re-emergence from the underworld of Hades, either portrayed or implied in the New Testament's Books of Matthew, Luke, Acts, and Revelation (20:14), or the rapturous epistolary visions of St. Paul described in his Second Letter to the Corinthians and in his Fourth Letter to the Ephesians (4:9). Here the saint is, according to Carol Zaleski, *Otherworld Journeys: Accounts of Near Death Experiences in Medieval and Modern Times* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987], 28, "charged with the task of reporting the grisly details of postmortem punishment for the sake of those who are still alive." Moreover, we also see the same hellish imagery in the many references to the infamous

resonate in the various iterations, Greek, Latin and vernacular, of the apocryphal *Visio S. Pauli* (also: the *Visio Sancti Pauli*, the *Vision of St. Paul*, or the *Apocalypse of Paul*), a varied collection of narratives that envision a Christian cosmological structure which will be considered here as a collective entity. Originally dating to the third or fourth century, this account was translated into Old English in versions recorded in the eleventh century in MSS Bodleian Junius 85/86, and also in the twelfth-century in MS Lambeth 487.<sup>13</sup> The narrative offers detailed visions, described by Bauckham as a “cosmic tour” where the Pilgrim St. Paul is escorted to a “third heaven.” In this in-between space he witnesses both the joys of the virtuous elect in the floral and sweet-scented domains of paradise and the miseries of sinners wallowing in the dark and fiery underworld.<sup>14</sup> Beset upon by malign spirits – demons – who orchestrate their agony, these sinners are at times disemboweled, worm-infested, gashed, blinded, or burned in ever-present fiery pits in a creative range of tortures, each corresponding to the character of their most evident vice. This influential vision, treated in homilies and denounced at various points by Augustine, Aldhelm, and Aelfric (who distrusted the “third heaven” idea and generally preferred the sacred scriptures over the

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Gehenna district outside of Jerusalem (also referenced as Ben Hinnom), a disreputable and noxious district originally associated with human sacrifice and serving as a sort of garbage dump and burial mound for the condemned. Coming to assume the form of a hellish wasteland associated with all manners of the grotesque and morbid, Gehenna serves as a hellish backdrop in those sections where the crucifixion is recounted in the Gospels Matthew, Mark, and Luke (Matthew 5:22, 29, 30; Matthew 10:28; Matthew 18:9; Matthew 23:15, 33; Mark 9:43, 15, 47; and Luke 12:5). Within these depictions it represents a fiery and defiled space for the unredeemed, and so “designates the place of eternal punishment of the wicked, generally in connection with the final judgment. It is associated with fire as the source of torment” (accessible online at: <http://biblehub.com/topical/g/gehenna.htm>; last accessed on Jan. 25, 2020). Note: this definition also appears in Geerhardus Vos, “Gehenna,” *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* II, 1183. Gen. Ed. James Orr (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1956).

**13** See *The Old English Vision of St. Paul*, ed. Antonette DiPaolo Healey. Speculum Anniversary Monographs, 2 (Cambridge, MA: The Medieval Academy of America, 1978), especially 15–16 and 26–31; and John Nicholas Chadbon, “Oxford, Bodleian Library, MSS Junius 85 and 86: An Edition of a Witness of the Old English Homiletic Tradition,” Ph.D. diss., University of Leeds School of English, November 1993 (online at: <http://etheses.whiterose.ac.uk/21093/1/420664.pdf>; last accessed on Jan. 25, 2020); see also: Theodore Silverstein, *Visio Sancti Pauli: The History of the Apocalypse in Latin, Together With Nine Texts* (London: Christophers, 1935); and Theodore Silverstein, “The Vision of Saint Paul: New Links and Patterns in the Western Tradition,” *Archives d'Histoire Doctrinale et Littéraire du Moyen Âge* 26 (1959): 199–248.

**14** See James H. Morey, “Paul in Old and Middle English,” *A Companion to St. Paul in the Middle Ages*, ed. Stephen Cartwright. Brill’s Companions to the Christian Tradition, 39 (Leiden

*Apocrypha*),<sup>15</sup> serves as one of many upon which later otherworldly journeys and demonic encounters are patterned.<sup>16</sup>

Such patterns of scriptural transmission are evident in the post-Augustinian writings of St. Gregory, whose proselytizing strategies, expressed in his *Dialogues*,<sup>17</sup>

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and Boston: Brill, 2012), 449–68; see also: Richard Freeman Johnson, *St. Michael the Archangel in Medieval Legend* (Woodbridge, Suffolk: Boydell, 2005), 97.

**15** See Healy *The Old English Vision* (see note 13), 41–45. Further explanation about the reservations expressed by early theologians toward the various iterations of the *Visio Sancti Pauli* are found in Richard North, *The Origins of Beowulf: From Vergil to Wiglaf* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2006); 94; Patrick Sims-Williams, *Religion and Literature in Western England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1990); 249; and Dario Bullitta, “Sources, Context, and English Provenance of the Old Danish *Visio Pauli*,” *The Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 116.1 (January 2017): 1–23; here 4.

**16** Baukham’s study, *The Fate of the Dead* (see note 11), 34, focuses particularly on the punishments suffered by the condemned and their cultural resonance in the early stages of development, noting a course of evolution that culminated in the development of the “hell tour” narrative as the influence of Christianity proliferated: “It seems that during the first two centuries C.E. a gradual change took place in Jewish and Christian belief about the fate of the wicked after death, from the older view that the wicked are not actively punished immediately after death, but held in detention awaiting punishment at the last judgment, to the later view that the eternal punishment of the wicked begins immediately after death. This change was very important for apocalyptic descents to the underworld (where increasingly only the wicked were located). But only the later view enabled a seer to see and describe in detail the punishments actually being inflicted on the wicked in hell. The later view therefore spawned a long tradition of ‘tours of hell,’ in which a variety of different punishments appropriate to different categories of sinners is described.”

**17** Gregory’s writings show his proselytizing ambitions as revealed in his extreme sensitivity to the dynamics of conversion and the use of appropriate imagery to facilitate that process, and the dynamics and tendencies toward backsliding, especially in rural populations, particularly with respect to the Anglo-Saxon populations on the pale of Northern Europe. Judith Herren, *The Formation of Christendom* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1987), 177, discusses Gregory’s awareness of the role that *iconae* played in solidifying the schism between the Eastern and Western church traditions of the post-Roman world, and their value in enhancing the conversion efforts of unlettered rustics, especially the Pope’s important recognition that “pictures are the bibles of the illiterate” and that the Roman Church recognized the value of powerful imagery. To this end, Gregory’s writings, particularly his *Dialogues* and *Pastoral Care*, offer a useful indication of the means by which this important Church Father sought to bridge the gap between the Christian “self” and the non-Christian “other.” Poorly served by an elite and largely rooted, communally-based ecclesiastical structure, those resisting Christianity’s embrace required deliberate and specific appeals to the imagination to facilitate their conversion (see footnote 20, below). Thus Gregory’s patterns of thinking about the dynamics of conversion, conjoined with the power and popularity of Paul’s *Visio* in its various iterations, proliferated into the harrowing traditions of eighth century Anglo-Saxon narratives. The graphic imagery of the harrowing narrative thus served purposeful applications for



relied on comparable imagery which, in turn, influenced a full field of other early medieval English narratives, including the anonymous *Life of St. Cuthbert* (upon which Bede based his version), as well as the aforementioned *Dream of the Rood*, and also the later works *Tundale the Knight* (*Visio Tnugdali*, mid-twelfth century, with Middle English translations dated to the fifteenth century) and Adam's *Vision of Monk of Eynsham* (ca. 1197, with Middle English translation dated to late fifteenth century). The echoes of Paul's hell tour seem particularly resonant in the early Anglo-Saxon Latin and vernacular corpus, serving also to shape various Christian literary journeys, including the Saint's Life, the *Visio*, and later, the various related forms of salvation narrative that supplied a model for the stark demonic and grotesque portraits that reinforced Christianity's "othering" tendencies. The purposeful adaptation of the *Visio*'s motifs reflects a conceptual effort by writers to impose the hell tour's imaginative power upon contested and transforming cultural spaces and landscapes across Europe, and particularly within the contentious, slowly-converting English frontiers chronicled by Bede and defended by Guthlac, and the Irish archipelagos within which Brendan navigated. All likewise depict a version the otherworld vision in which a demonic "other" possesses, torments, and sometimes tortures unfortunate sinners in ways accommodating culturally evolving moral and social codes. Demarcating the uncertain boundaries and borderlands that distinguish the condemned and elect within the indeterminate landscapes of early Christian Europe, the motifs of Paul's *Visio*, supplemented by the distinctive imagery employed in Pope Gregory's conversion strategies, served within a larger cultural conversion narrative. In that narrative the hell tour, in providing that morally and psychologically imperative boundary between saints and sinners, enabled patristic writers to envision imaginative and conceptual demarcations between "us" and "them," and thus served to establish a cultural hegemony defined by a continental Christian ethos and practices.

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multiple audiences, uneducated laity, and semi-educated clergy alike. Established in scripture, apocrypha, and literary precedent before Gregory's time as a literary motif, the hell tour therefore enhanced his conversion efforts, representing an imagistically powerful tool to enhance conceptions of the demonic and to serve an othering function to slowly converting, marginally literate populations with only a precarious, hesitant embrace of the Christian faith.

## Bede: Distinctions on the Frontiers Between Elect and Fallen Christian Cultures

As described by historian N. J. Higham, one purpose of Bede's *Ecclesiastical History* is as a mediating effort to stabilize the newly established twin monasteries at Wearmouth and Jarrow in the wake of ascension of Ceolwulf, a newly installed Northumbrian King whose dynastic claim to the throne had re-emerged after a two-decade banishment.<sup>18</sup> Bede's signature work, then, was written in terms that instructed and appealed to those Northumbrian elites upon which his monasteries depended, and whose patronage their brethren sought. Patterned after the five-book structure of the Old Testament Pentateuch and, as shown in its timely allusions to Virgil, also modeled on imperial Rome's hesitant embrace of the Christian faith, *Ecclesiastical History* portrays the cultural conversion narrative of Anglo-Saxon England toward a re-embrace of a fitter, more authentic version of Christianity than the tainted practices left behind to the post-Roman Britons and the residually pre-Christian influences that also lingered.<sup>19</sup>

The most significant and purposeful of Bede's hell tours are those of the Irish missionaries St. Fursa and Brother Drythelm, which are respectively placed within the broad historical narratives in Books III and V. Dedicated to describing the proliferation of the Christian faith after King Edwin's conversion, Book III also covers a series of miracle accounts and describes the strengthening of relations between Rome and English churches, as shown in the construction of a network of monasteries and the establishment of bishoprics across East Anglia, Essex, Mercia, and Northumbria over the course of about two centuries. Borrowing heavily from the *Life of St. Fursa*, which Bede mentions multiple times through this episode, the account of Bishop Fursa's otherworld journey appears within the nineteenth chapter of the thirty chapters that comprise Book III. A condensed otherworld tour patterned after the *Visio* tradition, this episode also adapts the fiery imagery advocated by Gregory to enhance its proselytizing message.<sup>20</sup> Harassed by demons who hurl the fiery remains of a condemned sinner at him and sear his

<sup>18</sup> Nicholas J. Higham, *(Re-)reading Bede: The Ecclesiastical History in Context* (London: Routledge, 2006), 41–44.

<sup>19</sup> *Bede's Ecclesiastical History*, ed. Bertram Colgrave and R. A. B. Mynors (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969), Book III, Chapter ixx, 268–76.

<sup>20</sup> His *Dialogues*, written during the papacy of St. Gregory (590–604), represents an intermediary between the underworld vision of Augustine and the more fully Christianized perspective of Bede, demonstrating that “a providential order underlies events and the age of great saints and signs from Heaven has not passed” (Zaleski, see note 12; here 28). In Book 4 of the *Dialogues*, Gregory discusses the afterlife for faithful souls and provides material enabling

flesh, Fursa carries this scar back from his otherworld sojourn as a confirmation of authenticity of his journey. His efforts as an East Anglian missionary establishing his relevance within the book's larger narrative, the episode thus fits within the larger theme of demarcating Christian boundaries across uncertain borderlands and frontiers inhabited by alternative faith practices. In this way it reinforces the moral urgency of Bede's effort to distinguish between the "elect" believers from the fallen ethics, practices, and behaviors of the apostate "other." Even so, despite its thematic connection to the larger narrative currents of Book III, the Fursa episode seems oddly and rather randomly placed in Chapter 19, disconnected by chronology and sequence within this section's larger focus. This sense is reinforced by the fact that Bede focuses only briefly on the saint's missionary work, biographical background, and his monastery experiences. Confining his modest treatment of Fursa's achievements exclusively within this single chapter (as opposed to melding these within the Book's larger narrative), Bede also makes repeated reference to the

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readers to grasp the late sixth-century notion of hell, portraying it as noxious and terrifying, in terms suited to the literalist sensibilities of early Christian converts. See *Saint Gregory the Great: Dialogues*, trans. Odo John Zimmerman, O.S.B., *The Fathers of the Church: A New Translation* (1959; Washington DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 1983), especially 229–54. Of particular importance is Gregory's awareness of the imagistic power of fire as a motif of the Christian underworld. One vivid illustration follows a discussion of how sinful souls bear eternal torment in celestial hellfire. Here, Gregory relates to his fellow interlocutor, his deacon Peter, the story of one Repartus, "a prominent man" (229), whose momentary death provides occasion for a journey into the otherworld for the purpose of teaching us "that we should use the opportunities given to us to correct our evil ways" (229). The fires of hell, as reported by Repartus, are described in the form of a giant funeral pyre, and Gregory interprets this image to mean not that "wood is burned in hell," but rather "to give ... a vivid picture of the fires of hell, so that, in describing them to the people, they might learn to fear the eternal fire through their experience with natural fire" (230). Gregory then explains the purpose of this hell fire, noting that "In His unbounded mercy, the Good God allows some souls to return to their bodies shortly after death, so that the sight of hell might at last teach them to fear the eternal punishments in which words alone could not make them believe" (237). Elsewhere, Gregory maintains that "there is one kind of fire in hell, but it does not torment all sinners in the same way, for each one feels its torments according to his degree of guilt" (254). Written in 594, Gregory's *Dialogues* assert an influence on the vision of hell which was particularly resonant in the world of Anglo-Saxon monasticism. Colgrave and Mynors, editors of *Bede's Ecclesiastical History* (see note 19; 128–29), cite Gregory's *Dialogues* "as the chief Western source of those visions of heaven, hell, and purgatory which formed an important genre in medieval literature and reached its highest point in Dante's *Divine Comedy*." In Bede's portrayals of the hell tour, therefore, we might note a syncretic conjoining of Gregory's influences and those of the *Visio Pauli* tradition to inform underworld vision to which the condemned are banished and the elect are defined by faith as much as by cultural affiliation.

version of Fursa's *Life* that constituted his source materials, and devotes the chapter's narrative almost entirely to his account of Fursa's otherworld journey. With focus on the expansion of the church through the various conversion experiences and the establishment of monasteries and bishoprics across the Saxon, Kentish, and Northumbrian regions in Book III, and with Fursa's noteworthy efforts, described vividly in other sources, in facilitating these developments, one explanation for these choices in the placement of this subject matter is in Bede's sense that a contemporary account of an otherworld journey is appropriate at this particular narrative juncture. So here he uses images and accounts appropriate both to the imagery of the *Visio* tradition, and also to the proselytizing mandates outlined by Gregory, likewise reinforcing his larger purpose to establish Continentally-aligned cultural territoriality and to define a *gens Anglorum* across these Christianizing terrains.

This purpose is reinforced in the more graphic account of the otherworld travels of Brother Drythelm in Book V, which appears at a more crucial and fraught juncture in the history of the English, one closer to the present time, and one more associated with the crises of the present day. Placed after a succession of accounts of healing miracles, this account is calculated to offer models of fit Christian behavior to a backsliding aristocratic class of nobles and monastics and a King of Northumbrian dynastic lineage newly installed in a turbulent transition of regal authority. Higham writes of this final section that "[t]he effect of (its) opening chapter is to ground Bede's final book in the virtues of God's beloved agents, still active in the recent past despite the decease of particular hero-figures such as Cuthbert, whose ministry God had validated by such wondrous 'signs' at the close of the previous book."<sup>21</sup> Like the model offered by St. Cuthbert, the Bishop and later patron Saint of Lindisfarne, whose miracle accounts close out Book IV of Bede's account, Book V also features a full field of miracle accounts and otherworldly visions, which are calculated to remove the narrative from the recent past and reorient it toward a more clearly defined set of faith mandates in the present. In this regard Drythelm's hell tour helps to reinforce Bede's pressing call for a return to the moral and institutional fitness and doctrinal certainty of the Roman church.

The first miracle account in Book V relates the holiness of John of Beverly, a sanctified figure lately of the monastery at Hexham, who miraculously brings a grotesquely scabrous youth out of his mute and deaf stupor and transforms him into a healed, conversant, and fuller version of himself, reciting the alphabet at John's instruction and liberated from his disfigurements, now with "a

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<sup>21</sup> Higham (*Re-)reading Bede* (see note 18), 173.

clear complexion, ready speech, and beautiful curly hair, whereas he had once been ugly, destitute, and dumb.”<sup>22</sup> John then proceeds to effect a number of healing miracles, related as eyewitness accounts by Bishop Berthun of Beverly, patterned after scripture and “collectively portray(ing) John as especially beloved of God and of quasi-apostolic status, comparable to St. Peter.”<sup>23</sup> Bede then proceeds to other descriptions of recently deceased church fathers, including Archbishops Theodore of Tarsus and Wilfrid, St. Egbert, missionary to Ireland, and St. Willibrord, missionary to Frisia, accounts allowing him to “present key figures of northern English Christianity as agents of the papacy in its universal mission to convert the heathen.”<sup>24</sup> Further, in bringing the tumultuous recent past into the moral and cultural imperatives of the present, these accounts also serve as precursors for the most vivid episodes in the final book, a trio of “near-death miracle stories” which, according to Higham, “provide a potent message, warning of the terrible reality of hell, so the necessity of a moral life and attention to contrition and absolution, both earlier and in the face of death.”<sup>25</sup>

Within this collection of stories, Bede’s account of Brother Drythelm of Melrose reads most directly after the fashion of Paul’s *Visio*, also portraying a tour undertaken under the protections of an otherworld guide. In the stupor of dire illness, Drythelm finds himself as a Christian pilgrim escorted through the underworld and serving as witness to both heavenly and hellish realms. In his journey he is guided “by a man of shining countenance and wearing bright robes” along a “deep and broad valley,” one side of which was “exceedingly terrible with raging fire” while the other was beset by storms of “violent hail and icy snow.”

The souls of the condemned, “a countless multitude of misshapen spirits,” were tossed viciously and without respite from one side to the other, with his guide cautioning Drythelm that “this is not hell as you think.” That vision comes subsequently, as the pair enters a dark, noxious, and noisome realm where fiery flames shoot forth, tossing “human souls ... like sparks flying upward with the smoke” while “evil spirits,” jeering and laughing, drag shrieking sinners back toward fiery pits in the darkened distance.<sup>26</sup> Approached and

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<sup>22</sup> Bede’s *Ecclesiastical History*, ed. Colgrave and Mynors (see note 19) Book V, ch. ii, 459.

<sup>23</sup> Higham, *(Re-)reading Bede* (see note 18), 174.

<sup>24</sup> Higham, *(Re-)reading Bede* (see note 18), 176.

<sup>25</sup> Higham, *(Re-)reading Bede* (see note 18), 176.

<sup>26</sup> Bede’s *Ecclesiastical History*, ed. Colgrave and Mynors (see note 19), V. 12, 489–93: “Lucidus ... aspect et clarus erat indumento”; “uallem multae latitudinis ac profunditatis, infinitae autem longitudinis”; “feruentibus nimium terribile”; “furenti grandine ... frigore niuium atque”; “innumerabilis spirituum deformium multitudo”; “non enim hic infernus est ille, quem

surrounded by those spirits, Drythelm is quickly rescued by his guide and removed from this horrific scene, delivered across a great wall that serves as a boundary between worlds, and enters into a peaceful, fragrant, and verdant realm where he catches the first glimpses of heaven. Returning from his otherworldly journey and having recovered from his dire illness, he promptly divides his property between his wife and sons and takes residence in a hermitage, where he comes to embody an exemplary monastic life.

This vision is deliberately placed proximally to the teleological end point of Bede's *History*, which is the realization of heaven on earth, captured in a fully established *gens Anglorum*: a society having navigated the boundaries between heaven and hell, and confirming its elect status by grasping the importance of its alignment with proper values and fit Christian practices; a fully formed Christian nation aligned with the Roman church, divinely approved after rigorous testing and developing its values; and a society founded on virtues and practices of the Continental Christianity as expressed in scripture and a fit observance of the Savior's ascension on Easter. In this way, Bede's vision of Christian history is both "historical" and also allegorical, asserting the primacy of Christianity over a pagan and heretical past, patterned both after the narrative structures of Biblical Pentateuch and Imperial Rome's slow embrace of the faith. Here, however, demons and monsters and other relevant depictions of otherworldliness, as shown in the examples of Fursa and Drythelm, serve an important moral component in delineating the boundaries and defining the character of Bede's conception of history as a grand narrative of Christianization, where God's divine plans are once again revealed and fulfilled before an entire people.

Bede's severe attitude toward Ecgfrith, who ignored Egbert's and Cuthbert's cautions about expanding the kingdom's boundaries, speaks to his anxieties about the health of the Christian faith on its frontier borderlands. The Drythelm episode, positioned toward the later stages of Bede's history, confirms his effort to define the *gens Anglorum* as a distinctly Romano-Christian people defined by their distinctive faith and Northumbrian Anglo-Saxon cultural identity against select ethnic "others" – mainly the backsliding Britons, but also the Irish and Scots whose traditions and faith practices likewise stood at variance with the Romish habits that Bede championed. In placing Fursa's otherworld sojourn within the middle stages of a narrative aligning of his England with continental Rome, and in placing Drythelm's guided tour through hell toward its end point,

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putas"; "spiritibus hominum, qui instar fauillarum cum fumo ascendentium"; "malignorum spirituum."

Bede stresses the relevance of both episodes in realizing a culture defined by its embrace of a proper Christian faith.

In recounting the experiences of both otherworld travelers to witness both the torments of the condemned and the benefits and delights of the elect, Bede not only partakes in the harrowing traditions captured in the *Visio Pauli* but also deploys it in its typical “othering” fashion, to provide a template to distinguish the “true” community of Anglo-Saxon Christianity against a backsliding pagan or, worse, a Briton “other” and to confirm the soundness of the English alignment with the customs and traditions of the Church of Rome. Throughout his *Ecclesiastical History* Britons serve as a generalized “other,” central to Bede’s purpose in defining *gens Anglorum*.<sup>27</sup> Characterized by their Pelagianism, Arianism,

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27 In recent decades a field of scholars have sought to elucidate the “nationalizing” features of Bede’s work and to explore its articulation of the distinctions between the *gens Anglorum* and various “others,” particularly the Britons and the Irish. One seminal article within in this category is by Peter Wormald, “Bede, the *Bretwaldas* and the Origins of the *Gens Anglorum*,” *Ideal and Reality in Frankish and Anglo-Saxon Society: Studies Presented to J. M. Wallace-Hadrill*, ed. P. Wormald, D. Bullough, and R. Collins (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), 99–129. For a broader historical overview on the formation of English national identity, see Ann Williams, *Kingship and Government in Pre-Conquest England c. 500–1066*. British History in Perspective (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1999), 1–21. See also: Alan Thacker, “Bede and the Irish,” *Beda Venerabilis: Historian, Monk and Northumbrian*, ed. L. A. J. R. Houwen and A. A. MacDonald (Groningen: Egbert Forsten, 1996), 31–59; Steven Fanning, “Bede, Imperium, and the *Bretwaldas*,” *Speculum* 66.1 (January 1991): 1–26; Uppinder Mehan and David Townsend, “‘Nation’ and the Gaze of the Other in Eighth-Century Northumbria,” *Comparative Literature* 53.1 (Winter 2001): 1–26; W. Trent Foley and Nicholas J. Higham, “Bede on the Britons,” *Early Medieval Europe* 17.2 (May 2009): 154–85 (online at: <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1111/j.1468-0254.2009.00258.x>; last accessed on Jan. 25, 2020); Vicky Gunn, *Bede’s Historiae: Genre, Rhetoric and the Construction of Anglo-Saxon History* (Woodbridge, 2009), 68–76; Claire Stancliffe, “British and Irish Contexts,” *The Cambridge Companion to Bede*, ed. Scott DeGregorio (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 69–83; Windy A. McKinney, “Creating a *Gens Anglorum*: Social and Ethnic Identity in Anglo-Saxon England Through the Lens of Bede’s *Historia Ecclesiastica*,” Ph.D. thesis: University of York Centre for Medieval Studies, March 2011; Samuel Cardwell, “‘The People Whom He Foreknew’: The English as a Chosen People in Bede’s *Historia Ecclesiastica*,” *Journal of the Australian Early Medieval Association* 11(2015): 41–66; Sarah McCann, “*Plures de Scottorum regione*: Bede, Ireland, and the Irish,” *Eolas: The Journal of the American Society of Irish Medieval Studies* 8 (2015): 20–38; and McCann, “Bede’s *Plures De Scottorum Regione*: The Irish in the *Historia Ecclesiastica Gentis Anglorum*,” Ph.D. thesis, Galway: National University of Ireland, May 2013 (online at: ARAN [Access to Research at NUI Galway], <http://hdl.handle.net/10379/3944>; last accessed on Jan. 25, 2020), 147–55.

For an alternative position on this general line of argument, see George Molyneaux, “The Old English Bede: English Ideology or Christian Instruction?,” *English Historical Review* 124.511 (2009): 1289–323, who offers a reply to Peter Wormald, “The Venerable Bede and the ‘Church of the English’,” *The English Religious Tradition and the Genius of Anglicanism*, ed. G. Rowell

and backsliding habits, Bede's Britons represent a fallen Christian other beguiled by heresy and outdated practices, a pernicious alternative to Aidan's Church even with its flawed observance/dating of Easter and improper tonsures. These portrayals correspond to the othering rhetoric within the exegetical traditions of both the Old and New Testaments, which served as conceptual models for his account, and which define the chosen Jews against the Pagans in the former case and Christians against Jews and Pagans in the latter.

Fursa's and Drythelm's hell tours, then, serve purposefully to reinforce the distinctions between an 'elect' self and a 'condemned' other, thereby codifying a "proper" Anglo-Saxon ethos and faith practices, and reinforcing a sense of cultural unity within a context where it is vulnerable and contested. Bede thus distinguishes the fit Christian 'self' – the *gens Anglorum* – against the condemned other – improperly Christian (as in the case of the Britons, Jews, or Pre-Christian pagans) whose debasement perpetually validates their exclusion and godly disfavor. Portraying the Britons in varying and nuanced ways to contrast an 'other' to his conception of the English 'self' (i.e., mostly Northumbrian Anglo-Saxon), Bede deploys the hell tour at strategic moments in his *Ecclesiastical History* to facilitate this contrast and to confirm the moral fitness of the culture he envisions.

## ***Guthlac*: Distinguishing the Whole, Communal, and Saintly from the Dissolute, Disfigured, and Demonic**

In Felix's *Life of St. Guthlac* the heroic warrior-hermit, living in isolation on the edge of the Mercian fenlands, wages battles of apocalyptic consequences with hideous and dissolute demons. Written "shortly before or shortly after Bede's death"<sup>28</sup> in 734, Felix's *Life* represents an important contemporary complement to Bede's work,<sup>29</sup> and in its vivid vision of a fiery underworld it offers an equally

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(Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 13–32, rpt. in *The Times of Bede: Studies in the Early English Christian Society and Its Historian*, ed. S. Baxter (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 207–28.

<sup>28</sup> See Peter Hunter Blair, *The World of Bede* (1970; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 280.

<sup>29</sup> The edition used here is *Felix's Life of St. Guthlac: Text, Translation and Notes* by Bertram Colgrave (1956; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985). Vernacular verse versions (*Guthlac* A and B, based on Felix's *Life*) are also in the Exeter Book. Felix's *Life of St. Guthlac* is



important means to envision the syncretic blending of scriptural, apocryphal, and classical traditions that defined the hell tour and asserted its value in the appropriation of frontier landscapes within larger processes of conversion. Describing the life of the martyred warrior-saint who was said to be born in 674, Felix describes how the younger Guthlac fought against the Britons on the Welsh border in the pagan hinterlands (near the region that would a century later become demarcated by Offa's dyke). Later he emerged from this violent, sword-wielding background of Mercian nobility to enter the monastic life, and then retired to his hermitage on the remote island of Crowland, a disreputable, formerly Roman barrow on the eastern fens.

Envisioning Guthlac's transformation from a pagan warrior-prince supported by his comitatus to a devout member of monastic community to a sanctifying eremite living in his isolated fenland retreat, Cohen explains that the warrior-saint doing battle against fragmented, diseased, and demonic other is "congruent with the colonialist ambitions of the eighth century as the kingdom of Mercia strove to overcome its inner fragmentation to become a larger collective unity."<sup>30</sup> Within those Eastern Fenlands, Guthlac navigates landscapes of indeterminate borders, his battles with those demons mirroring the struggles seen in Bede's *Ecclesiastical History* at the edges of the Christian frontier.

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distinguished from the briefer account in Vercelli XXIII, with the relationship between Felix's *Vita* and that represented in *Guthlac A* and *Guthlac B* a frequent topic of discussion among scholars. The matter of alignment in underworld imagery between the *Vita* and *Guthlac A* offers a general point of consensus. For a thorough overview on the content, contrasts, and critical positions taken on the various iterations of the Guthlac story, see Peter Dendle, *Satan Unbound* (see note 2), 103–14; see also: Penelope Audrey Shore, "The Cultural Context of the Old English *Guthlac* Poems," Ph.D. diss., University of Exeter, 1982 (online at: <https://ethos.bl.uk/OrderDetails.do?uin=uk.bl.ethos.2572021>; last accessed on Jan. 25, 2020), esp. 7–24; and Justin T. Noetzel, "Monster, Demon, Warrior: St. Guthlac and the Cultural Landscape of the Anglo-Saxon Fens," *Comitatus* 45.1 (2014): 105–31.

**30** See Cohen, *Medieval Identity Machines* (see note 6), 121. Cohen also usefully summarizes his interpretation of the poem and of culturally significant identifying functions of Guthlac's demonic encounters in the introduction of his work (here pages XXVI–XXVII), observing that "Saints like Guthlac mapped new paths of masculine becoming for eighth century bodies, circumscribing the possible by attaching identity to constricted physical and psychological spaces. Guthlac's body is a site of multiple overlap, condensing in its fantastic flesh recent histories of Mercian colonization and consolidation; a racialized imagination of 'Anglo-Saxon' community predicated on the expulsion of the Britons as nonsensical monsters, as demons whose identities do not coalesce into human shape; a suturing point at which the dispersed identity of the contemporary island could imagine itself a unity, projecting into the future a Mercian hegemony characterized by solidity, racial integration, and a divinely mandated colonialist destiny."

Confusion over boundaries, borders, and identities frame the eighth century narrative of Felix's *Vita* as much as the vernacular A and B versions of the tenth century Exeter text, with all versions employing versions of the hell tour to speak to the collective urgency to overcome those climates of fragmentation and disunity to achieve a greater hegemonic alignment with continental Christianity.

By highlighting the demons' disordered fragmentation as much as their diseased disfigurements, Felix underscores Guthlac's ultimate holiness as much as his wholeness, a culmination reinforced by the Saint's timely rescue by his own patron Saint Bartholomew. Even before Guthlac makes his eremitic home in that indeterminate and long-contested swampland, a disreputable space where others formerly sought to unearth ill-gotten treasures, it is established that he had spent much of his secular life navigating borderland conflicts. Thus qualified and conditioned for the otherworldly struggle before him, he becomes a Christian warrior-saint within this marginal, contested place, enduring Satan's temptations and waging apocalyptic war "with spiritual arms against the wiles of the foul foe," armed with "the shield of faith, the breastplate of hope, the helmet of chastity, the bow of patience, and the arrows of psalmody."<sup>31</sup> The account of Guthlac's life says much about its author's familiarity with the scripturally infused and vividly detailed works of Gregory the Great. It also reveals that Felix was versed in the fiery details and motifs of the *Visio* tradition and familiar with at least some of Bede's writings, particularly his *Life of St. Cuthbert*, which Felix "uses very considerably," according to editor Bertram Colgrave.<sup>32</sup>

Felix's *Life* portrays monastic hermit after the customary narrative manner as Guthlac confronts the ungodly underworld forces of darkness and despair, a righteous warrior undergoing identity transformations and his hero's harrowing journey patterned after those of other saints and also of the Savior himself. Keeping nightly vigils of prayer and fasting while alone in his retreat, Guthlac is suddenly besieged by a troop of "foul spirits." Bursting forth from earth and sky alike, these spirits were "ferocious in appearance," and "terrible in shape."<sup>33</sup>

Aiming seemingly to delight his audience in a vision their demonic hideousness, Felix spares little detail in portraying their

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<sup>31</sup> Felix's *Life of St. Guthlac*, ed. Colgrave (see note 29), 90–91: "spiritualibus armis adversus teterrimi hostis insidias"; "scutum fidei, lorica spei, galeam castitatis, arcum patientiae, sagittas psalmodiae."

<sup>32</sup> Felix's *Life of St. Guthlac*, ed. Colgrave (see note 29), 16.

<sup>33</sup> Felix's *Life of St. Guthlac*, ed. Colgrave (see note 29), 103: "inmundorum spirituum"; "aspectu truces, forma terribiles."

great heads, long necks, thin faces, yellow complexions, filthy beards, shaggy ears, wild foreheads, fierce eyes, foul mouths, horses' teeth, throats vomiting flames, twisted jaws, thick lips, strident voices, singed hair, fat cheeks, pigeon breasts, scabby thighs, knotty knees, crooked legs swollen ankles, splay feet, spreading mouths, raucous cries.<sup>34</sup>

Attacking the genuflecting hermit, these spirits set about to wrest him from his house and drag him about the swampy environs of his fenland hermitage. Guthlac remains unmoved, his faith steadfast despite the pain they inflict with "whips of iron." Dragging him first to the uppermost reaches of the gloomy and freezing skies, they then carry Guthlac "to the accursed jaws of hell."<sup>35</sup> Reveling in the horror of this event, Felix spares no detail in his account of the vision

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34 *Felix's Life of St. Guthlac*, ed. Colgrave (see note 29), 103: "capitibus magnis, collies longis, macilentia facie, lurido vultu, squalida barba, auribus hispidis, fronte torva, trucibus oculis, ore foetido, dentibus equineis, gutture flammivomo, faucibus tortis, labor lato, vocibus horronis, comis obustis, buccula crassa, pectore arduo, femoribus scabris, genibus nodatis, cruribus uncis, talo tumido, plantis aversis, ore patulo, clamoribus raucisonis."

35 *Felix's Life of St. Guthlac*, Colgrave ed. (see note 29), 105–07: "flagellorum ferreorum"; "ad nefans tartari fauces." The episode continues as Guthlac faces the "yawning mouths" ("patulis hiatibus") of the "fiery entrances of Erebus" ("igniflua Herebi hostia"), the demons pointing him toward the "the bowles of Styx" ("fibrae Stigiae") and the "the gulfs of Acheron" ("aestivi Acherontis"). Guthlac remains defiant toward the demons, those "sons of darkness, seed of Cain, who are but dust and ashes" ("filii tenebrarum, semen Cain, favilla cineris"). Then, with "with outpoured radiance" ("aethereis sedibus"), St. Bartholomew appears "with golden brilliance" ("aureo fulgore") from "Glorious Olympus" ("radiantis Olympi") with his heavenly charges to ward off Guthlac's captors. Supplying a useful historical context to illuminate these events, Cohen, *Medieval Identity Machines* (see note 6); here 145–46, situates Felix's account of Guthlac's rescue by St. Bartholomew within contemporary struggles over territoriality in those disputed and indeterminate Mercian fenlands: "Guthlac's struggles against the demons of the fens exactly replays struggles not only against the scattered Celtic peoples who, like their diabolical analogues, were none too pleased to be forced cede their dwelling places to colonizers, but also Mercias endeavor to overcome its own internal heterogeneity and to justify pan-insular ambitions of expansion." Also placing this violent scene in a specific historical moment, Michael Baker, "Now Flying over the Hell Mouth" (see note 7), 13–15, writes that "Guðlac's vision is not the result of a near-death experience, and his notice of what could be easily taken for the smoke of an eruption in the north leads to demons carrying him off to the horrors of the hell-mouth ... Regardless of whether this is a narrative reimagining of Gregory's volcano or by an anonymous author's apocalyptic source, Felix's context imposes a specifically East Anglian perspective, I think, to mark the proximity of the danger for the English audience ... It is worth considering whether the remarkable literary presence that Guðlac enjoys is partly due to his vision having indeed been followed by 'a host of cursed spirits' arriving from the north, bringing fire down on the unrighteous. Crowland itself is said to have been sacked and burned by Danes in 870, and any subsequent translator would, I think, have struggled not to see a connection between that event and Guðlac's vision."

before the suffering and steadfast saint in vivid terms recalling both Paul's *Visio*, Gregory's fiery underworlds, and Bede's *Fursa* and *Drythelm* episodes:

For not only could one see there the fiery abyss swelling with surging flames, but even the sulphurous eddies of flame mixed with icy hail seemed almost to touch the stars with drops of spray; and evil spirits running about amid the black caverns and gloomy abysses tortured the souls of the wicked, victims of a wretched fate, with various kinds of torments.<sup>36</sup>

In his sophisticated reading of this passage, Cohen situates this portion of the *Guthlac* narrative – both Felix's Latin version and the *Guthlac A* verse version based on it, within what he terms an "identity machine," or processes of personal and collective identity formation, and identifies the colonizing impulse resonating in both texts, which are "obsessed by the annexation of new land and its conversion into secure possession"<sup>37</sup> as newly Christianized territory. His encounter serves to strengthen that impulse to distinguish the Christian self from the demonic other, with Guthlac facing "a breathless barrage of deformed limbs, animal fragments, regurgitated flame, and glimpses of diabolical visages,"<sup>38</sup> against which he embraces a unifying function. Even with what Colgrave terms as the "frequent Virgilian echoes" in Felix's *Life*<sup>39</sup> – those references to Erebus, Styx, Acheron and Olympus – these details conjoin syncretically with the seeds of Cain and the presence of Godly intermediaries and apocalyptic imagery to recall the apocryphal *Visio Pauli* – and to demonstrate the othering function served by this vivid demonic encounter within an emerging cultural and Christian territoriality.

In its various iterations, the Guthlac story, as shown both in Felix's eighth century *Vita* and particularly the later tenth century version *Guthlac A* narrative of the Exeter Book, also concerns the process of identity formation in portraying the transition of the violent warrior to the eremitic monastic in communion with God as an analogue to the larger territorializing aspirations of his society. Portraying the melding of disparate versions of masculinity, different versions of community, and different stages of the Saint's life, these "consolidating and

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<sup>36</sup> Felix's *Life of St. Guthlac*, ed. Colgrave (see note 29), 105: "Non solum enim fluctuantium flammaram ignivomos gurgites illic turgescere cerneres, immo etiam sulphurei galciali grandine mixti vortices, globosis sparginibus sidera paene tagentes videantur, maligni ergo spiritus inter favillantium voraginum atras cavernas discurrentes, miserabili fatu animas impiorum diversis cruciatuum generibus torquebant."

<sup>37</sup> Cohen, *Medieval Identity Machines* (see note 6), 141.

<sup>38</sup> Cohen, *Medieval Identity Machines* (see note 6), 141.

<sup>39</sup> Felix's *Life of St. Guthlac*, ed. Colgrave (see note 29), 17.

globalizing impulses”<sup>40</sup> within the *Guthlac* materials direct themselves toward eighth-century Merca’s overcoming its fragmented cultural character and realizing a coherent territorial identity emerging out of disparate kingdoms, a non-literate pagan past, an imperfectly Christian set of beliefs and practices, and an indeterminate and forbidding fenland landscape. In this way, Guthlac’s demonic encounters in his hermetic retreat reflect not only his emergence from former versions of himself, but also the tensions and uncertainties of Christianity at the Mercian borderlands and frontiers.

Guthlac’s demonic encounters also capture a version of the hell-tour or harrowing narrative, patterned after the *Visio* and modeled on, as Cohen suggests, the eremitic narratives of Paul and Antony.<sup>41</sup> The grotesque disunity and discord shown by the demons attacking the warrior-saint articulates the quest for social and cultural coherence and the synthesis of multiple identities into a singular Christian culture with its appropriate constructions of masculinity and faith practices. The saint’s body, rescued by his guide and protector, becomes an expression of that cultural, political, and communal aspiration. His passage through that otherworldly, demonic realm of torment, culminating in his rescue by St. Bartholomew, offers a metaphorical reflection of this desire for communal salvation and cultural coherence – for a sense of territoriality.

The popularity of the *Visio S. Pauli* narrative to early Christian sensibilities is explained in part by the imagery of the harrowing narrative, which offered moral clarity to faith adherents and provided clear ethical and spiritual coordinates and boundaries within liminal, indeterminate space. Having emerged from a violent past at the West Mercian borderlands, the young prince Guthlac is no stranger to boundary conflict, and in his maturation he is thus primed to navigate and claim the demon-saturated Eastern Fenlands as a Christian landscape. While his demons represent the worst aspects of Guthlac’s former life – his violent former existence in a pagan, martial community in a world fueled by the satisfactions of conquest – they also capture the ever-present temptations to return to his warrior community and his violent past. Within his hell tour, his demons serve to inscribe the boundaries between his violent, sin-filled, fragmented past and his saintly, eremitic present, “represent(ing) everything Guthlac once was in order to affirm the scarcity of what he has become as well as the impossibility of return.”<sup>42</sup> In this way, the imagery of his hell tour not only serves to demarcate the boundaries of Guthlac’s personal transformation from pagan warrior to Christian saint; it also

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<sup>40</sup> Cohen, *Identity Machines* (see note 6), 121.

<sup>41</sup> Cohen, *Identity Machines* (see note 6), 132.

<sup>42</sup> Cohen, *Identity Machines* (see note 6), 133.

allegorizes a larger cultural conversion narrative. In encountering and emerging from that demonic otherworld that captures the character of his pre-Christian past, Guthlac severs his connection to it and renders it irrecoverable, a separation from that “nonindividuated collectivity” of monstrous, fragmented, and “un-thinkable” demons shown in the *Guthlac* A version of the Exeter book,<sup>43</sup> who also populate these indeterminate Crowland fens as outdated versions of heroic masculinity and render it to, in Bede’s words, a *locus certaminis*, a “place of spiritual struggle” within a “vast wilderness awaiting saintly settlement.”<sup>44</sup> Bede, Felix, and the later composer of the *Guthlac* A poem all partake of the habit of assigning demonic characteristics to the Britons, portraying them as sharing a common language and deserving of their unflattering portrait. If the monsters of *Beowulf* represent extreme versions of the heroic warrior who engages them in combat, the sanctifying Guthlac represents a spiritualized evolution of that heroic identity. His is a version of heroism suited to the spiritual weaponry he wields in his otherworld battle, weapons and armor symbolizing the rigid conceptual boundary between Christian self and demonic other – the “full armor of God” – the sword, shield, helmet, and breastplate referenced in Ephesians 6: 11–17.<sup>45</sup> His story, in which the sword-wielding Mercian warrior-thegn becomes the bearer of the *spiritus gladius*, codifies the territorializing process of realizing that common cultural identity.

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<sup>43</sup> Cohen, *Identity Machines* (see note 6); here 133 and 150. With respect to the demons’ horrific dissembling and fragmentation, Cohen reads the description in conjunction with an earlier passage from Chapter 22 of Felix’s *Vita*, which describes the saint’s pre-hermetic synthesis of the best qualities of his monastic brethren at Repton, an incorporation into a “tranquil whole,” and a “synthesis of the best the realm has to offer” within “a social body that can proclaim its superiority to the incoherent Britishness of the demons,” juxtaposed against a “radicalized corporeal otherness not amenable to ‘Anglo-Saxon’ subsumption.” His emergence after the necessary harrowing of this discordant space marks Guthlac as an apt representative of Mercian hegemony and proper Anglo-Saxon Christian masculinity. In the middle space of the underworld, Guthlac stands apart from the corrupted essence of the demons, who are marked by their diseased, fragmented, and disfigured character as much as by their incoherent shrieking in a coarse Brittonic dialect.

<sup>44</sup> Cohen, *Identity Machines* (see note 6), 136–39.

<sup>45</sup> *Felix’s Life of St. Guthlac*, ed. Colgrave (see note 29), 90. See also note 31, above.

## St. Brendan's *Navigatio*: Finding the Condemned Other in the Peripheral Waterworlds

The hell tour episodes in Bede's *Ecclesiastical History* and in Felix's *Vita* and the vernacular iterations of the Guthlac story portray struggles to establish "territoriality" within indeterminate or contested spaces. In so doing, they provided each writer with a useful and clarifying imaginative analogue, one mirroring his own culture's struggles within marginal landscapes to create conceptual borders between self and other which, in turn, helped to articulate the social, and later, political borderlands that must be negotiated, established, and ultimately, extended to realize that Continental Christian hegemony. Situated in the remote Atlantic archipelago of western Ireland, the *Navigatio Sancti Brendani Abbatus* reflects an othering habit both aligned with and distinguished from the traditions of these Anglo-Saxon sources. Compelling in recent decades to scholars interested in syncretizing of Patristic traditions with the narrative pattern of the *Immram*, or sea journey, of ancient Celtic mythology, the *Navigatio* has gained attention of critics who recognize its refashioning of the path to saintliness as a perilous, spiritually-infused seafaring journey. Likewise drawing heavily from the traditions of early Latinate Christianity,<sup>46</sup> and particularly the influence of the *Visio S. Pauli*, the work proliferated within robust Latin and vernacular traditions.

Dated to the late ninth or early tenth century, this popular and well-disseminated work<sup>47</sup> features a narrative based on the sixth century saint and his monastic cohorts who, in their nautical adventure quest, elevate the motif of the *peregrinatio* – and so expand the concept of Latin Christian territoriality into the forbidding far reaches of the western Irish archipelago. Scholars in

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**46** Contemporary scholars identify the Latin edition of Carl Selmer, *Navigatio Sancti Brendani Abbatis* (South Bend, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1959) as the most authoritative scholarly version, replacing that of Denis O'Donoghue, *Brendaniana* (Dublin: Browne & Nolan, 1893). A reputable Modern English version is that of O'Meara, John J., trans., *The Voyage of Saint Brendan: Journey to the Promised Land* (1976; Mountrath, Portlaoise: Dolmen, and Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press, 1985).

**47** See Selmer, *Navigatio* (see note 46), xxxii–li; See also: Carl Selmer, "A Study of the Latin Manuscripts of the *Navigatio Sancti Brendani*," *Scriptorium* 3.2 (1949): 177–82; here 177, where the author remarks on the "bedazzling labyrinth of contaminated readings of various types" and the "surprisingly large variety of designations under which the *Navigatio* is sailing in the maelstrom of medieval manuscripts" (online at: [https://www.persee.fr/doc/scrip\\_0036-9772\\_1949\\_num\\_3\\_2\\_2227](https://www.persee.fr/doc/scrip_0036-9772_1949_num_3_2_2227); last accessed on Jan. 25, 2020). See also: John D. Anderson, "The *Navigatio Brendani*: A Medieval Best Seller," *The Classical Journal* 83 (1988): 315–22. To ease confusion over any disparate narrative details, I use the Latin edition by Selmer and the translations of O'Donoghue, *Brendaniana*, and O'Meara, *The Voyage of St. Brendan* (see note 46).

recent decades, particularly Charles D. Wright,<sup>48</sup> Alfred Siewers, and Aisling Byrne, offer useful contexts to align the *Navigatio Sanctis Brendani Abbatus* with the works previously considered, with all three serving a comparable territorializing function on the boundaries of Christianity.

Likewise, these scholars have also done much to define the coordinates of that otherworld setting, also noting how these reflect the influence of the *Visio* tradition. To begin, Siewers describes an important contrast to frame this larger pattern of thematic alignment across the Anglo-Saxon and Irish traditions, observing that “... in Anglo-Saxon hagiography, the eighth century locale of St. Guthlac’s mound mirrored the mead hall in *Beowulf* as transformative citadel-tomb opposed to surrounding fenlands, even as the sea figured alienation in Anglo-Saxon poetry.” In contrast to “these symbolic complexes of *habitus* or indwelling,” however, “[t]he Irish Otherworld portal dwelt in a spatial temporality that turned any objective matrix of space inside-out,” such that within the Irish otherworld traditions within which the popular account of Brendan’s travels is situated, the distinctions between living and dead, interior and exterior, human and non-human become “indistinguishable and interpenetrating,” ultimately “interweaving different streams of narrative time into a landscape trope.”<sup>49</sup> Despite its popularity and territorializing ambitions, the *Navigatio* depicts an archipelagic version of the hell tour that contrasts with the more distinctively Saxon features of interiorized spaces and chronological time captured by Beowulf’s Heorot and Guthlac’s fenland mound, within plots expressing a clear *telos*, a “potential spiritual reward in the context of an emerging Mercian hegemony.”<sup>50</sup>

Even so, the work serves to reinforce ethical distinctions and behavior codes between the elect and the condemned – the saints and the sinners – to establish a hegemonic character that remains elusive in that archipelagic territory. Brendan’s band travels through water, island, and shoreline boundary spaces and visits island retreats, some abandoned and others populated by eremitic recluses and vaguely demonic figures alternatively forbidding and welcoming in an indeterminate world defined more by cyclical patterns than by chronological time. Noting how the work explores the “mismatch between human limitation and otherworld abundance,” Byrne likewise considers the appropriateness of the hero’s voyage in relation to his “craving inappropriate levels of knowledge and the experience of wonders for the sake of sheer novelty” within a “voyage (which) itself might be

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<sup>48</sup> Wright, *Irish Tradition* (see note 7).

<sup>49</sup> Alfred Siewers, *Strange Beauty: Ecocritical Approaches to Early Medieval Landscape*. The New Middle Ages Series (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2009), 133.

<sup>50</sup> Siewers, *Strange Beauty* (see note 49), 141.



considered somewhat frivolous, a product of a rather unsaintly curiosity on Brendan's part, rather than sincere devotion." However, beyond his impulse to "absolve Brendan ... of any accusations of hubris," the author is also "at pains to stress the limitation of even the holiest of fallen human beings and to point out that Brendan himself accepts his own limitation and concomitant dependence on God."<sup>51</sup> The Christian hero's otherworld vision, in this case as with the others, is a complicated negotiation that frames the journey within a larger moral purpose. The *Navigatio* thus conjoins motifs of travel and fantasy suitable to the genre of the "otherworldly pilgrim" narrative, displaying comparable features that likewise captivated medieval audiences. A consideration of its plot elements is therefore appropriate to explore its alignment with the *Visio* tradition.

Alerted to the existence of a distant island paradise, the young and ambitious monk Brendan exhorts his monastic cohorts to embark upon a search for this destination. A group of fourteen brethren sustained by their faith and resolute in their purpose, elect to join him in this quest. This fortuitous number of travelers is believed to ensure their safety and good fortune across their adventures; but that sense of security is soon disrupted when a trio of late comers join the quest, their presence calculated to create discord and sow chaos among the seafaring travelers, offering initial hints of the perils later to be realized. This detail will prove significant at later points in the narrative, serving to distinguish between the elect who complete the journey and the condemned who succumb to its hazards along the way. Their number adjusted, this larger cohort survives an early encounter with an "Ethiopian devil" ("diaboli, infantem scilicet ethiopem")<sup>52</sup> intent on derailing their holy quest, one who takes possession of the first of the three late comers and prefigures the fates of the other two. Despite this loss the travelers partake of the sustaining resources offered by select islands along their way, including abundant sheep and fish, and pause on another to celebrate Easter Mass – an occasion marked by calendar that soon comes to signal the passage of time along their cyclical journey. They then observe Christmas rituals on still another island among a group of mysterious, eternally silent monks who nonetheless offer them timely and sustaining loaves of bread. After the fashion of Ulysses and his men extracting themselves from the torpor-inducing and spirit-robbing appeals of the Land of the Lotos-Eaters, the seafarers then sip from a magic well in a post-Lenten visit to a mysterious island and are

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<sup>51</sup> See Aisling Byrne, *Otherworlds: Fantasy and History in Medieval Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 50.

<sup>52</sup> Selmer, *Navigatio* (see note 49), 15.

temporarily sidetracked by this quest. However, as they extract themselves from this ominously spirit-robbing locale with their faith and purpose strengthened, the brethren are informed by a prophetic sea bird about the cyclical nature of their quest and that their travels proceed in accordance with an Easter-Christmas-Lenten yearly schedule across seven cycles until they are properly purified to realize their quest. Leaving the second latecomer on an island inhabited by a trio of anchorites, they then survive encounters first with fierce sea creatures and later mythical beasts, at one point encamping upon an island that is soon revealed, when it submerges, to have been the back of a massive whale. Throughout their journey their endurance is tested to confirm their collective faith, and each subsequent episode confirms God's faith in their quest, as revealed in the sustenance and protection that He provides.

As the narrative moves toward conclusion the band of seafarers, now numbering fifteen, endure yet another series of ominous encounters. Sailing first along the shores of slag-covered terrains bereft of trees and plants, they hear the clamor of working blacksmiths, grimy and hideous, who show their displeasure by hurling handfuls of fiery slag at the travelers as they battle unfavorable winds and currents to make their escape from these hostile shores. Reassuring his charges in this retreat, Brendan informs them that they approach the gates of hell, thus beginning a stage of their journey in which the Celtic otherworld assumes the character of the Christian underworld. On cue a group of demons emerges from a craggy island cliff side to possess the third latecomer and bear him off to hell, and in quick retreat the seafarers suddenly encounter another craggy island shore, shrouded in mist, where a lonely figure sits upon a boulder pelted by the icy surf. The brethren soon learn his identity: in a key point of alignment with the *Visio* tradition, the penitent identifies himself as Judas Iscariot, who reveals that in this solitary and frigid condition of the moment he is only temporarily in respite from the fiery torments of hell, an allowance extended to him during the season of Advent.<sup>53</sup>

The Savior's traitor informs the seafarers of his customary dwelling amidst the condemned souls in the pits of hell, and thus offers them a glimpse of that underworld domain to which he must return, rejoining the most notorious biblical sinners, Pilate and Herod among their number, when his respite ends with Advent's conclusion. While Brendan intercedes and is able to extend Judas's

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<sup>53</sup> Wright, *Irish Tradition* (see note 7); here 142, explains the basis for this alignment, describing how the "[t]he motif of the Sunday respite of the damned; here granted to Judas, appears in Prudentius and other early Christian writers, but again the *Visio S. Pauli* was probably the most important source of dissemination for the idea in both Ireland and Anglo-Saxon England, where it occurs quite frequently in the vernacular sources."

respite from hell on behalf of the forgiving Savior, his brethren soon witness the returning demons who, eager to continue their torments toward the traitor, become angry with the future saint's intercessory efforts. Showing both his faith in his extending of this charity and his power to keep the angry demons at bay, Brendan's sanctified stature is confirmed in this brief standoff as the story reaches its final chapters.

A syncretic conjoining of the elements of the traditional *Immram* of Celtic myth and the motifs of the early Christian Latin *Visio*, the story expresses the common themes of endurance, obedience, and steadfastness in the face of danger and uncertainty. The seafaring pilgrims embark upon chaotic and mysterious terrains across their journey, and the story suits the expectations of an audience of early Christian Irish ascetics doing missionary work as much as it aligns with the *Visio* tradition of the Christian pilgrim capturing glimpses of the condemned in a hellish underworld. Like Bede's accounts of Fursa and Dryhhelm in *Ecclesiastical History* and Felix's account of Guthlac's otherworld travels, replicated particularly in the tenth century *Guthlac A* poem, Brendan and his nautical cohorts encounter a harrowing scene in a glimpse at a hellish otherworld at a late stage of their journey, suggesting that the cyclical pattern to their travels is breaking, and their journey is nearing its completion. With their glimpses of that hellish underworld realized, their obedience to Brendan confirmed, and their Christian fitness therefore established, the brethren emerge as Christian soldiers and proper embodiments of saintly behavior, having ventured through an indeterminate waterworld and expanded the church's territories on the outermost shores of Europe. Their elect status is at last confirmed on yet another craggy island shore where they encounter St. Paul the hermite, dwelling within his solitary hermitage.<sup>54</sup>

Securing the blessing of the one who embodies in his ascetic example the highest virtues of the hermit's life, the brethren are sent along their way homeward, during which they pick up the trail of another sea-beast, divinely sent, who directs them to the Paradise of Birds in time for a final celebration of Pentecost. There they provision themselves for their ultimate journey to the Promised Land of the Saints, where Brendan and his brethren behold a vision of that territory realized. There, they are blessed once again for their final homeward sojourn which concludes their travels and enables the saint and his followers to live out their days in sanctified and Godly favor as both esteemed nautical adventurers and proper exemplars of the ethos of the Christian wayfarer.

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54 See also Albrecht Classen, *Water in Medieval Literature: An Ecocritical Reading*. Ecocritical Theory and Practice (Lanham, Boulder, et al.: Lexington Books, 2018), ch. 3, 63–87.

## Conclusion: The Hell Tour's Continuing Imaginative Power and Purpose

Eternally of interest to scholars and historians, boundaries and borderlands are borne first out of features of geography – waterways, island shores, mountain ranges, and rivers – but are also creations human imagination, borne out of conceptual features of landscape and culture – and are formed and preserved by social considerations, competing value systems, contested spaces, and ethnic differences. Thus they reveal much about process of identity and cultural formation and self-determination. In indeterminate landscapes, including fenlands, archipelagos, frontiers, and other ambiguous and contested spaces without fixed or prevailing hegemonic constructs, but also within regions of cultural multiplicity and competing value systems and social practices, boundaries and borderlands are as much creations of human imagination as of landscape geography.

In short, borderlands and boundaries are imposed on fens and frontiers because they define distinctions between one ethnicity and another, one belief system and another, one group of people (“us”) and another (“them”). Literary depictions of journeys through borderlands and peripheries thus comment on moments of crisis or indeterminacy as one distinct a faith or belief system vies for territorial supremacy with others, and establishes its boundaries and borders in reaction to those tensions. Emerging from the deep mists of Judeo-pagan tradition and filtered through the motifs of Old Testament, the harrowing/hell tour narrative proliferated in conjunction with the territorializing process itself, a trend speaking to its othering characteristics as disparate cultures vied with one another to assert their hegemonic privilege in disputed or indeterminate terrains.

Citing the work of a field of other scholars about the “otherness” of British and Irish landscapes, Byrne identifies in these western reaches concepts of “peripherality,” “westernness,” and “insularity” and describes how these and other characteristics had “a particularly profound resonance for writers working the peripheral *alter orbis* of Britain and Ireland.”<sup>55</sup> The otherworld hell tour

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<sup>55</sup> Byrne, *Otherworlds* (see note 51), 141–183, here 141–43. In advancing these positions Byrne cites the work of a field of scholars, including Kathy Lavezzo, *Angels on the Edge of the World: Geography, Literature, and English Community, 1000–1534* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2006); Catherine A.M. Clarke, *Literary Landscapes and the Idea of England, 700–1400* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2006); *The Sea and Englishness in the Middle Ages: Maritime Narratives, Identity and Culture*, ed. Sebastian I. Sobecki (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2011); Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, “Green Children From Another World, or the Archipelago in England,” *Cultural Diversity in the British*

served writers of the apocryphal *Visio* in the early Christian world to determine the contours of its conflicts and to identify forces of opposition within that *alter orbis*. It served English and Irish writers in the Christian periphery in later centuries in establishing and asserting territoriality, identifying for each their culture's deepest threats and most important mandates, while also demarcating boundaries and defining their enemies. Within these marginal spaces patristic and vernacular writers alike exploited the aspects of otherness within their respective landscapes even as they imposed territorializing features on these "peripheral" spaces as enabled specifically by the hell tour motif. In this way they spoke to their contested character and articulated the mandate to establish boundaries between the Continental Christian "self" in opposition to the pagan (or incompletely Christian) "other" that represented the greatest challenge to that vision.

Prompted to identify with the Christian pilgrim escorted by the angelic guide, the audiences of the narrative in their various forms were likewise exposed to the horrors of condemnation and the benefits of conversion, responding likewise to the story's ethos and message. Emerging from the *Dialogues* of St. Gregory, supplemented by the motifs of the *Visio S. Pauli*, but also evident in such signature examples as the otherworldly account of Brothers Fursa and Drythelm in Bede's *Ecclesiastical History* and *Life of St. Cuthbert*, in Felix's *Life of St. Guthlac* and its later vernacular iterations, resonant in the *Navigatio Sancti Brendani Abbatis*, and condemned by Augustine but also by Anglo-Saxon notables including Aldhelm and Aelfric,<sup>56</sup> these hell tour accounts are confirmed in their popularity and proselytizing functions. Heavily reliant on a monstrous, horror-filled version of the underworld which served a unifying function within slowly Christianizing cultures, each struggling to establish its own hegemony and divided into disparate entities including the Saxons, Britons, Picts, Norse, Irish, and English. The latter, Bede implies, consist of various Saxons (South, East, and West), Mercians, and his native Northumbrians – who themselves subdivide further into Bernicians and Deirans.

Informed by the motifs of a pre-Christian past and a contested present, by the Old and New Testament accounts of scripture and by the classical vision of the underworld as shaped by the *Aeneid*, and apocryphal *Visio* traditions and the conversion-oriented insights of Pope Gregory, Bede, Felix, other writers of the *Saints' Lives*, as well as other chroniclers and adapters, patristic and vernacular,

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*Middle Ages: Archipelago, Island, England*, ed. Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, The New Middle Ages (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2008), 75–94; and Alfred Siewers, *Strange Beauty* (see note 49).

<sup>56</sup> See Richard North, *The Origins of Beowulf*, 94; Patrick Sims-Williams, *Religion and Literature in Western England*, 249; and Dario Bullitta, "Sources, Context, and English Provenance of the Old Danish *Visio Pauli*" (see note 15), 4.

drew upon these disparate sources to transform monsters into demons as important players and cast them strategically within hell tour accounts in an imaginative and territorializing progress toward a fully realized Continental Christian hegemony.

This othering motif served writers at the sunset of the first millennium as Rome-affiliated clerics sought to unify their faith and distinguish it from residual pagan and, later, in the early, imperfectly Christian versions that proliferated across the continent at the beginning of the third millennium, or in the seventh through the tenth centuries across the *alter orbis* of England and Ireland as the Christian faith of the Continent expanded its boundaries. In that respect this habit aligns the distant past with conflicts of territoriality across history, and particularly within the present time. In these contexts writers continue to speak to the liminality of select spaces, landscapes, and geographies. We might even note a comparable imaginative tendency in the present time as Trump-supporting Evangelical populations, unwavering in their support of their morally flawed champion, likewise maintain resolute faith in his best efforts to keep culturally transforming influences and changes, embodied in a liberal “other,” at bay, embracing also a narrative of fiery apocalyptic end-times to justify their elect status in defiance of that particular *alter orbis*.<sup>57</sup> In all cases, the maintenance of a culture’s hegemonic faith is assured and enabled by its most powerful, and occasionally, its darkest othering tendencies.

Beyond their value as saintly spectacle, these depictions of demonic imagery underscore the affiliations between the aristocratic class united and defined by warfare and an emerging monastic ethos informed by patristic, apocryphal, and scriptural motifs. The values of both cultures are conjoined and legitimized within narratives that portray the Christian pilgrim confronting, if not directly battling, a clearly defined “other” as he transverse the boundaries between heaven and hell and is witness to abject and suffering sinners and to horrific and grotesque and demons who orchestrate their torment. Borrowing heavily

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<sup>57</sup> For an insightful discussion of this conceptual tendency of “othering” among contemporary American evangelicals (and their habit of viewing the 45th president as their savior in this currently contentious cultural moment), see Alex Morris, “False Idol: Why the Christian Right Worships Donald Trump,” *Rolling Stone* (December 2019): 69–71, 97, here 97. Identified as particularly influential within this culture are the apocalyptic viewpoints of David Jeremiah, author of *The Book of Signs: 31 Undeniable Prophecies of the Apocalypse* (San Diego, CA: Thomas Nelson, 2019). Jeremiah is described as a “fervent follower of End Times theology,” and his book not only “‘proves’ Jesus’ imminent return,” but also “appeals to people already primed to believe” in the apocalyptic vision popularized by pastor Tim LaHaye, his predecessor at a “San Diego Megachurch” and co-author of the *Left Behind* series.

from pre- and early Christian elements, these renderings of the monstrous and the demonic within otherworld hell tours served an important mediating function between the identities of those who fight and those who pray. Such accounts therefore offer a means to envision more fully the relationship between the monstrous and otherworldly and the developing character of Christianity and the slow process of political and cultural unification in seventh- and eighth-century Anglo-Saxon England and ninth-and tenth-century Ireland.





Robert Landau Ames

## On Monstrosity in the *Shāhnāmah*: Philosophizing with Žaḥḥāk

Although studies of the Iranian national epic, the *Shāhnāmah* (*Book of Kings*) of Firdawsī (d. 1019 or 1025),<sup>1</sup> abound, few attend closely to the significance of monstrosity as a distinct theme. I therefore devote much of what follows to a close study of the language used to describe the monstrous elements of one particular figure, the snake-shouldered king Žaḥḥāk, in order to read this monster alongside recent attempts to treat modern horror fiction as a genre with special philosophical significance. However, to understand the historical context of *Shāhnāmah* necessitates an emphasis on the interplay between kingship and monstrosity, and the ethical dimensions of that interplay, as the driving force of this myth. The question posed to Žaḥḥāk by the blacksmith Kāvah, “tu shāhī va-gar azhdahā paykarī / bi-bāyad bidīn dāvarī,” or, in Dick Davis’s English translation, “A king then, or a monster? Which are you? Tell us, your majesty, which of the two?” may best encapsulate this interplay.<sup>2</sup> Unlike ancient accounts that minimize or deny Žaḥḥāk’s human origins and portray him as a dragon or demon, in Firdawsī’s circa 1010 C.E. telling, Žaḥḥāk’s kingship and monstrosity are not only closely linked, but also specifically reflect a medieval, rather than antique, cultural context. In Firdawsī’s account, the pre-Islamic, pre-medieval Persian demon (or dragon) is given a human origin and then proceeds down the path of monstrosity by opting to violate medieval Perso-Islamic norms of kingship and subsequently suffering a bestial hybridization instead of simply entering the narrative as a purely destructive and inhuman force, as is the case in pre-Islamic sources.

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<sup>1</sup> While there are a variety of different systems for transliterating Persian into English, this paper uses the Library of Congress system. Some of its secondary sources, however, use other systems, which has led to some inconsistencies in the spelling of Persian words.

<sup>2</sup> Abu al-Qāsim Firdawsī (d. 1019 or 1025), *Shāhnāmah*, ed. Johann August Vullers, Macan Turner, Julius Mohl, and Sa’id Nafīsī, vol.1 (Teheran: Birikhim, 1934), 46; Dick Davis, *Shahnameh: The Persian Book of Kings* (New York: Penguin Books, 2016). 19. See also: Nasrin Askari, *The Medieval Reception of the Shāhnāma as a Mirror for Princes*. Studies in Persian Cultural History, 9 (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2016); Mohamad Tavakoli-Targhi. “Contested Memories: Narrative Structures and Allegorical Meanings of Iran’s Pre-Islamic History,” *Iranian Studies* 29.1/2 (1996): 149–75, and Laurie Pierce, “Serpents and Sorcery: Humanity, Gender, and the Demonic in Ferdowsi’s *Shahnameh*,” *Iranian Studies* 48.3 (2015): 349–67.

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Robert Landau Ames, New York University, USA.

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Before approaching this analysis, however, it is worth beginning with a brief introduction to Firdawsī's *Shāhnāmah* and its account of the Žaḥḥāk myth. According to Firdawsī, Žaḥḥāk is an Arab prince whom the devil convinces to commit patricide. After killing his father, the good king Mardās, he invades and conquers Iran and commits his second regicide, this time against the legendary Persian king Jamshīd, whom Žaḥḥāk executes by sawing him in half. Following Žaḥḥāk's conquest of Iran, the devil appears again, this time in the form of a cook, and uses his culinary skills to ingratiate himself with Žaḥḥāk, after which he kisses the king's shoulders. This causes a serpent to grow from each shoulder, and, when Žaḥḥāk tries to remove the snakes, they grow back. None of his court physicians knows a treatment for this ailment until the devil appears once more, this time in the guise of a doctor, who informs the king that the only treatment for his new ailment is to feed the serpents the brains of young men.

Žaḥḥāk rules Iran for a millennium, attempting to satiate his snakes' hunger by feeding them the brains of Iranian youths all the while. A rebellion instigated by the blacksmith Kāvah eventually overthrows Žaḥḥāk and a native Iranian, Faraydūn, subdues Žaḥḥāk, imprisons him beneath Mount Damāvand (a mountain in Iran's Alborz range with a cultural significance comparable to that of Mount Athos or Mount Fuji), and claims the throne, becoming the epic's next hero-king.<sup>3</sup>

## An Introduction to the *Shāhnāmah*

The New Persian literature of Firdawsī's period, and especially the *Shāhnāmah*, was central to the preservation of Persian linguistic and cultural identity after the Islamic conquest. Firdawsī's *Shāhnāmah* is, famously, a poetic repository of pre-Islamic Iranian legends composed more than three centuries after the Islamic conquest of Iran following the Battle of al-Qādisiyyah in 636 C.E. An epic poem comprised of 50,000 couplets, it purports to chronicle the history of Greater Iran from the time of the world's creation until the fall of the Sassanian Empire at Qādisiyyah. Traditional scholarship usually divides the poem into three sections, each of which corresponds to an "age" of humanity. The amount of fantastical content in the events reported declines as these ages progress from the mythic (ustūrah'i) to the heroic (pahlavānī), and then to the historic (tārikhī). Žaḥḥāk's story appears in the earliest, mythic portion.

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3 Aḥmad Tafazzolī, "Ferēdūn," *Encyclopedia Iranica* IX.5 (1999), 531–33; an updated version is available online at <http://iranicaonline.org/articles/feredu-> (last accessed on Dec. 4, 2019).

The rise of poetry in New Persian like Firdawsī's *Shāhnāmah* also parallels political developments in the wider Islamic world. In the Umayyad period (661–750 C.E.), privilege within the new Islamic polity extended to, and only secondarily through, Arab genealogy, with non-Arab converts needing Arabic patronage (and symbolic adoption into their patrons' lineage) to safeguard their position in the new order (this was known as the *mawālī* system). The Abbasid revolution in 750 C.E., which was spurred by, among other things, a rebellion in the far eastern province of Khurāsān (which was later the birthplace of New Persian poetry), saw a major shift in caliphal preferences, with the new Abbasid caliphate establishing its capital, Baghdad, in what was previously the territory of the Persian empire and adopting a number of royal customs and habits of literary-intellectual patronage modeled on those of earlier Persian monarchs.

Throughout the ninth and tenth centuries C.E., this also led to the employment of semi-dynastic Persian families like the Barmakids and the Buyids as administrators and as the “power behind the throne,” which was accompanied further east in Greater Persia by the rise of Persian-speaking Muslim dynasties like the Saffārids (861–1003) and the Sāmānids (819–999). The latter, a dynasty that claimed descent from Bahrām Chūbīnah (a Sassanian general and character in the *Shāhnāmah*) and patronized the first great New Persian poet (Rūdakī, ca. 859–941 C.E), ruled basically autonomously in Khurāsān, where Abū al-Qāsim Firdawsī was born in 940 C.E.

Firdawsī was from the *dihqān* class – a native Persian class of landholders who, despite having lost much of their power after the Islamic conquest, still viewed themselves as the heirs to elite pre-Islamic Persian culture and who aided in the reconstruction of Persian culture in the Islamic period by, among other things, continuing to transmit pre-Islamic Persian literature, serving as likely sources for Firdawī and his immediate predecessors.<sup>4</sup>

Between his *dihqān* status and the rise of dynasties willing to support Persian literary production (like those discussed above), Firdawsī was well-positioned to produce a poetic retelling of Iran's pre-Islamic mytho-history. Written and oral sources also preceded Firdawsī's *Shāhnāmah* and helped shape his output. Aside from oral transmission by *dihqāns* and other elder storytellers, there were also a number of written precedents. The first of these is a Middle Persian text, the *Khwadāy-nāmag*, which no longer survives. There

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<sup>4</sup> Ahmed Ashraf, “Iranian Identity iii. Medieval Islamic Period,” *Encyclopaedia Iranica* XIII.5 (2012), 507–22; an updated version is available online at <http://iranicaonline.org/articles/iranian-identity-iii-medieval-islamic-period> (last accessed on Dec. 4, 2019).

were also earlier New Persian precedents, including Abū Maṣṣūr Ma‘marī’s prose *Shāhnāmāh*, composed for the Sāmānid court in 957 C.E., and Abū Maṣṣūr Daqīqī’s *Shāhnāmāh* (composed ca. 977 C.E), the first attempt at a verse *Shāhnāmāh*, which Firdawsī cites as a source. Firdawsī legendarily sought (and was denied) the patronage of the ethnically Turkic Ghaznavid dynasty (977–1186 C.E.), who were also active patrons of Persian literary production.

## Monsters in the Medieval Context

According to Jeffrey Jerome Cohen’s 1996 seminal article “Monster Culture,” monsters, unlike demons or dragons, are figures that hybridize the human with the animalistic and/or Other, as Ṣaḥḥāk does in Firdawsī’s narrative; not only do his snakes introduce an animalistic element to his otherwise human body, but he is also an Arab, the medieval Iranian audience’s ethno-linguistic other.<sup>5</sup> Following Cohen, Asa Mittman has helped contribute to a more fully-developed sense of the cultural function of monsters in medieval literature. In “A Marvel of Monsters,” his (and Marcus Hensel’s) introduction to *Primary Sources on Monsters*, he notes that the period’s werewolf narratives frame monstrosity as a curse; similarly, we can claim that Firdawsī’s Ṣaḥḥāk narrative presents his monstrous transformation as the result of a kiss from Satan.<sup>6</sup> Mittman has hypothesized that the hybridity of some monsters in medieval texts is a result of metaphorical thinking, suggesting, for example, that because a text describes a centaur to have “the *shape* of a human above and is *like* an ass below,” it provides “a creature not made of the parts of any other being, but rather, having parts that look like those belonging to known creatures.”<sup>7</sup> This, however, is not the case for Firdawsī’s Ṣaḥḥāk, as the text says clearly that snakes (*mār*), not creatures *like* snakes, grew from his shoulders.

<sup>5</sup> Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, “Monster Culture (Seven Theses),” *Monster Theory: Reading Culture*, ed. id. (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), 3–25; here 6.

<sup>6</sup> Asa Simon Mittman and Marcus Hensel, “Introduction: A Marvel of Monsters,” *Primary Sources on Monsters*, ed. id. Demonstrare, 2 (Plymouth, UK: ARC Humanities Press, 2018), 1–6.

<sup>7</sup> Asa Simon Mittman and Susan M. Kim, *Inconceivable Beasts: The Wonders of the East in the Beowulf Manuscript*. Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies, 433 (Tempe, AZ: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 1993), 1–24; here 13.

## Žaḥḥāk in Modern Research

Žaḥḥāk tends not to figure as prominently as other kings in research on Firdawsī's *Shāhnāmah*. Those authors who do mention him seldom focus on him, usually limiting their attention to Žaḥḥāk's status as a tyrannical usurper of the Iranian throne, his foreignness, or his position in the genealogy of heroes in the *Shāhnāmah*'s later heroic age. However, with the exception of Laurie Pierce's "Serpents and Sorcery," they generally have little to say about his monstrosity as such.

In her 1984 study, "The Development of a Literary Canon in Medieval Persian Chronicles: The Triumph of Etiquette," E. A. Poliakova argues that Žaḥḥāk became a literary device in subsequent medieval Persian chronicles, noting that "the Zahhak type" became a model "evil genius" upon whom later Persian chroniclers patterned their accounts of historical figures, claiming, for example, that Juvaynī represents Chingīz Khān (better known in the West as Genghis Khan) along this pattern.<sup>8</sup> Similarly, Mohamad Tavakoli-Targhi's 1996 discussion of Žaḥḥāk focuses on his identification as a non-Iranian in post-*Shāhnāmah* histories, noting that *Nizām al-tavārikh*'s "chapter on Persian kings (*mulūk-i Furs*) ... included the non-Persian rulers Zahhak, Afrasiyab, and Istihan."<sup>9</sup> Jerome Clinton and Marianna S. Simpson only mention in passing Žaḥḥāk's role as an "evil usurper" when observing that Rustam's combat with the white *dīv* "seems to hark back to an earlier stage of mankind's development when, as recounted by Firdausi, mankind was pitted against monsters," though this passage is useful for our purposes in that it at least recognizes Žaḥḥāk as a monster.<sup>10</sup>

Fraser Clark's discussion of Žaḥḥāk in his article from 2010, "From Epic to Romance, via Filicide? Rustam's Character Formation," only mentions Žaḥḥāk when noting his position in the genealogy of Rustam, the great hero of the *Shāhnāmah*, terming the marriage of Rustam's father Zāl to Rūdābah (a descendant of Žaḥḥāk) "the Zahhak controversy."<sup>11</sup> This controversy 'shocks' Zāl's father Sām, who has an "instinctive recognition of taboo in any union between Zal's 'antidote' House of Faridun and Rudaba, the daughter of Mihrab's 'poison'

<sup>8</sup> E. A. Poliakova, "The Development of a Literary Canon in Medieval Persian Chronicles: The Triumph of Etiquette," *Iranian Studies* 17.2/3 (1984): 237–56; here 246.

<sup>9</sup> Mohamad Tavakoli-Targhi, "Contested Memories: Narrative Structures and Allegorical Meanings of Iran's Pre-Islamic History," *Iranian Studies* 29.1/2 (1996): 149–75; here 160.

<sup>10</sup> Jerome W. Clinton and Marianna S. Simpson, "How Rostam Killed the White Div: An Interdisciplinary Inquiry," *Iranian Studies* 39.2 (2006): 171–97; here 191.

<sup>11</sup> Fraser Clark, "From Epic to Romance, via Filicide? Rustam's Character Formation," *Iranian Studies* 43.1 (2010): 53–70; here 56.

House of Zahhak.”<sup>12</sup> In another article from the same year, Sebastiaan den Uijl also deals with Žaḥḥāk’s genealogical link to Rustam, limiting his discussion of the former to the observation that the descent from Žaḥḥāk also connects Rustam to the primeval and chaotic world.<sup>13</sup> Cameron Cross makes a similar observation in his 2015 paper, noting, “Although the physical Žaḥḥāk is long dead” by Rustam’s time, “both Rostam and Sohrāb are of his demonic lineage, and it is clear that his legacy of *āz* – avarice, pride, and concupiscence – can still wreak much suffering upon the world.”<sup>14</sup> Mohammad Jafar Amir Mahallati similarly notes Rustam’s descent from Žaḥḥāk in another 2015 article, where he writes, “Rostam, the main hero, is a descendant on his mother’s side of Zahhak, a demonic king.”<sup>15</sup>

In her monograph from 2014, *Faramarz, the Sistani Hero*, Marjolijn van Zutphen also attributes Žaḥḥāk’s significance to his status as the ancestor of later heroes in the Sīstānī cycle of epics, a collection of medieval Persian poems that followed Firdawsi’s *Shāhnāmāh*, highlighting, for example, Sām’s initial objection to his son Zāl’s marriage to Rudābah on the grounds of her descent from Žaḥḥāk.<sup>16</sup> As its title suggests, Edmund Hayes’s 2015 “The Death of Kings: Group Identity and the Tragedy of *Nezhād* in Ferdowsi’s *Shahnameh*,” is dedicated to lineage (*nizhād*) in its discussion of Žaḥḥāk. Hayes argues that “the death of the king is explicitly seen in terms of *nezhād*,” noting that the concern for lineage in the text’s condemnation of the killer of the last Sassanian king, Yazdgird, is particularly noteworthy in contrast to its discussion of Žaḥḥāk: whereas “Yazdegerd, is the epitome of glorious lineage (*farrokh-nezhād*),” his killer “is the epitome of evil lineage (*bad-nezhād*) ... and he is also known as ‘shepherd-born’ (*shabān-zādeh*).”<sup>17</sup> For Hayes, the “intense focus on a character’s evil lineage and low origin is unparalleled in the *Shahnameh*, even in the case of the demon-king Zahhāk who is, after all, the son of a noble king.”<sup>18</sup>

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12 Clark, “From Epic to Romance” (see note 11), 56.

13 Sebastiaan den Uijl, “The Trickster ‘Archetype’ in the *Shahnama*,” *Iranian Studies* 43.1 (2010): 71–90; here 74.

14 Cameron Cross, “‘If Death is Just, What is Injustice?’ Illicit Rage in ‘Rostam and Sohrab’ and ‘The Knight’s Tale,’” *Iranian Studies* 48.3 (2015): 395–422; here 412.

15 Mohammad Jafar Amir Mahallati, “Ethics of War and Peace in the *Shahnameh* of Ferdowsi,” *Iranian Studies* 48.6 (2015): 905–31; here 910.

16 Marjolijn van Zutphen, *Faramarz, the Sistani Hero: Texts and Traditions of the Faramarzname and the Persian Epic Cycle*. Studies in Persian Cultural History, 6 (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2014), 154.

17 Edmund Hayes, “The Death of Kings: Group Identity and the Tragedy of *Nezhād* in Ferdowsi’s *Shahnameh*,” *Iranian Studies* 48.3 (2015): 369–93; here 381.

18 Hayes, “The Death of Kings” (see note 17), 381.

Lineage is similarly prominent when, slightly later, a Zoroastrian priest warns Yazdgird's killer that "Zahhāk's murder of Jamshid was avenged by Faridun 'of glorious lineage' (*farrokh-nezhād*);" this description of Faraydūn's lineage is particularly noteworthy in that it uses the same term for Faraydūn (*farrukh-nizhād*) as it does for the later king Yazdgird.<sup>19</sup>

Dominic Parviz Brookshaw addresses Žaḥḥāk only in relation to Jamshid in his 2015 study of later poets' use of the latter, "Mytho-Political Remakings of Ferdowsi's Jamshid in the Lyric Poetry of Injuid and Mozaffarid Shiraz." There, Žaḥḥāk serves to move Jamshid's story to its conclusion. Brookshaw observes, "for many in the pre-modern Iranian world, Jamshid simply was Solomon." He points out that "this association ignores the disparity in the outcome of the Jamshid and Solomon narratives – Jamshid never regains his *farr* [divinely-ordained kingly glory and mandate to rule], does not reestablish his legitimacy to rule, and is succeeded by the demonic Zahhāk."<sup>20</sup> When "Jamshid ... grows overly proud about his many civilizing achievements," he "turns away from God (*ze yazdān pichid*), becomes ungrateful (*nā-sepās*), and loses his *farr* (and with it his right to kingship)," at which point, "the people turned against Jamshid, and the evil Zahhāk headed for *takht-e Jamshid* (Jamshid's throne, or possibly Persepolis), seized the royal throne and crown (*takht o kolāh*), and thus became the king of the Iranian lands (*shah-e Irān-zamin*)."<sup>21</sup> Charles Melville's 2016 study of the use of the *Shāhnāmah* in a later medieval chronicle (Rashīd al-Dīn's *Jāmi' al-tawārīkh*) notes that Rashīd al-Dīn's reliance upon the *Shāhnāmah* peaks with his discussion of Žaḥḥāk, who only appears as someone Iranians sought out after Jamshid's "*farr* and his glory (*shukūh*) disappeared" and Žaḥḥāk had "had killed his father and seized the kingdom."<sup>22</sup>

## Žaḥḥāk in Antiquity

While the discussions of Žaḥḥāk's lineage in these recent studies take his human origins for granted, as in Firdawsī's narrative, Žaḥḥāk is not a human usurper first and foremost in pre-Islamic Iranian mythology. In earlier texts,

<sup>19</sup> Hayes, "The Death of Kings" (see note 17), 382.

<sup>20</sup> Dominic Parviz Brookshaw, "Mytho-Political Remakings of Ferdowsi's Jamshid in the Lyric Poetry of Injuid and Mozaffarid Shiraz," *Iranian Studies* 48.3 (2015): 463–87; here 467.

<sup>21</sup> Brookshaw, "Mytho-Political Remakings of Ferdowsi's Jamshid in the Lyric Poetry of Injuid and Mozaffarid Shiraz" (see note 20), 465.

<sup>22</sup> Charles Melville, "Rashid al-Dīn and the *Shāhnāmah*," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 3.26 (2016): 201–14; here 212–13.

Žaḥḥāk appeared as a dragon or demon without strictly human origins; in Avestan Persian, he was known as Azhī Dahāka, from which both the word Žaḥḥāk and the New Persian word for dragon, azhdahā, derive. In Avestan, azhī could mean “snake,” “worm,” or “dragon,” but, already in Middle Persian, specific, unrelated terms (mār and kirm, respectively) had come to refer to snakes and worms, giving dragons a monopoly on azhī.<sup>23</sup> In the *Avesta* (the earliest available Zoroastrian sources), our subject appears as “a dragon-like (aži) monster with three mouths (θrizafanēm), three heads (θrikamarəδəm), six eyes (xšuuuāš.ašīm), with a thousand viles (hazaṇrā.yaoxštīm), very strong (aš.aojanhəm), a demoniac devil (daēuuīm drujiṃ).”<sup>24</sup> Elsewhere in the *Avesta*, Azhī Dahāka prays to Arduuī Sūrā and Vaiiu, deities of wind and water, for the power to depopulate the entire world.<sup>25</sup> Late antique Middle Persian sources offer more details on these vices and begin to cast Žaḥḥāk as a sort of anti-king (though he is still more demon than man), a figure representing the opposite of human virtue.

The *Bundahišn*, a Middle Persian cosmogony, gives an immediate, physical dimension to Žaḥḥāk’s counter-kingship, stating that he and his brother sawed the king Yīma (Jamshīd) in half after the khwarnah (the Old Persian equivalent of the New Persian term ‘farr’ discussed above) departed him. Another late antique source, the *Dēnkard* (a Zoroastrian theological text), identifies Dahāg as the founder of the “bad religion” (an anti-Zoroastrianism that the *Dēnkard* at one point identifies with Judaism) and claims that Dahāg issued “ten bad, counter-counsels” in contrast to the “ten good counsels to mankind given by Jam” (Yīma/Jamshīd).<sup>26</sup> Elsewhere, the *Sūdgar nask* (a later commentary on the *Avesta*) attributes to Dahāg five defects (greediness, want of energy, indolence, defilement, and illicit intercourse) that oppose what it frames as the best virtues, “wisdom, instructed eloquence, diligence, and energetic effort.” The *Dādestān ī dēnīg* calls Dahāg “one of the seven worst sinners ever, i.e., those who are close to Ahriman himself” and presents him as “the first who lauded (*stāyid*) sorcery (*jādūgih*).”<sup>27</sup>

These late antique sources historicize and humanize our monster somewhat; they tend to locate him within the line of the Pishdādīān, the mythical rulers of Iran that descended from Hūshang, succeeded Jamshīd, and preceded

23 Prods Oktor Skjærvø, Djalal Khaleghi-Motlagh, and James Russell. “Aždahā,” *Encyclopedia Iranica* (see note 3), III.2, pp. 191–205; an updated version is available online at <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/azdaha-dragon-various-kinds> (last accessed on April 5, 2019).

24 Skjærvø et al., “Aždahā” (see note 23).

25 Skjærvø et al., “Aždahā” (see note 23).

26 Skjærvø et al., “Aždahā” (see note 23).

27 Skjærvø et al., “Aždahā” (see note 23).



Faraydūn.<sup>28</sup> However, the genealogy provided by the *Bundahišn* traces his lineage to “the Evil Spirit himself.”<sup>29</sup> The sources from the same period also give Azhī Dahāka an eschatological significance; upon defeating him, Faraydūn does not kill Dahāg, but only incapacitates and binds him, for fear that upon his death, Dahāg’s body would flood the world with noxious creatures. These texts, however, predict that Dahāg will break his fetters and return to wage war against all life on earth at the coming of the millennium.

## Medieval Kingship: Perso-Islamic Norms

Despite the apparent antique or late antique pedigree of Firdawsī’s *Shāhnāmah*, it reflects its more immediate medieval Perso-Islamic milieu and its norms of kingship. Similarly, as we will see below, Ẓaḥḥāk, in violating these norms, is considerably more human (and less demonic) a monster-king in this telling than the above-discussed Zoroastrian ones, which itself may reflect these medieval, Perso-Islamic norms as much as the more demonic, earlier descriptions of him reflected the norms of Zoroastrian antiquity. Of course, as even the “Perso” in “Perso-Islamic” suggests, these norms (and the status of kingship itself) are the result of an interaction between pre-Islamic Persian elements and subsequent Islamic influences, the fusion of which led to the development of the high culture of the great Islamic empires from the ‘Abbasid period onward. However, that culture is more likely the distinctly medieval result of a fusion and mutual influence between these two elements rather than a unidirectional influence of antique sources upon a medieval artifact.

Recent research suggests that the *Shāhnāmah* was an object of active interest in the Ghaznavid period itself (977–1186 C.E.), despite Firdawsī’s aforementioned rejection by the famous Ghaznavid Sultan Maḥmūd (d. 1030 C.E.). A. C. S. Peacock, in his recent study, “Firdawsī’s *Shahnama* in its Ghaznavid Context,” concludes that Firdawsī’s *Shāhnāmah* is more comparable to other Ghaznavid sources in form and content than is usually recognized.<sup>30</sup> Going beyond Peacock’s rejection of the notion that the *Shāhnāmah* was of contemporary, rather than antiquarian, interest to its Ghaznavid readers, in her *Medieval Reception of the Shāhnāma*, Nasrin Askari has argued that its medieval reception indicates that

<sup>28</sup> Skjærvø et al., “Aždahā” (see note 23).

<sup>29</sup> Skjærvø et al., “Aždahā” (see note 23).

<sup>30</sup> Andrew Charles Spencer Peacock, “Firdawsī’s *Shahnama* in its Ghaznavid Context,” *Iran: Journal of the British Institute of Persian Studies* 56.1 (2018): 2–12.

“the *Shāhnāma* was primarily understood as a book of wisdom and advice for kings and courtly élites,” in which light it “enhances our understanding of the development of major concepts related to kingship and statecraft in later Perso-Islamic literature of wisdom and advice for rulers.”<sup>31</sup> The *Shāhnāmāh* advises kings to pursue virtues including honesty, calmness, trustworthiness, soft-spokenness, and humility.<sup>32</sup> It additionally dictates that a “good man must wish for the world what he wishes for himself” and that “food should be taken sparingly.”<sup>33</sup> As we will see, Żaḥḥāk violates many of these directives: he not only kills his father, but does so by trickery (proving himself to be dishonest in addition to ambitious), eats to excess rather than taking food sparingly, reacts with violence rather than calm, and ultimately wishes destruction for the world and survival for himself.

## Describing Żaḥḥāk

Żaḥḥāk enters the *Shāhnāmāh* in fully human form as the son of the Arab king Mardās. This early description is hardly flattering, even if it affirms his humanity: where his father is pure-hearted (pākdil), Żaḥḥāk is impure (nāpāk): “this pure-hearted one (īn pākdil) had a bad son [pisar-i bad] to whom there was not but a little kindness (kish az mihr bahrah nabūd andakī). This ambitious one had the name Żaḥḥāk (jahānjūi rā nām-i Żaḥḥāk būd). He was impetuous, unsteady, and impure (dalīr u sabuksār u nāpāk būd).”<sup>34</sup> Eventually the devil (Iblīs) appears to him as a well-wisher (bi-sān-i nikkh<sup>wāh</sup>).<sup>35</sup> While the reader knows that the well-wisher is in fact Iblīs, Żaḥḥāk does not: as the text says of his first conversation with the devil: “Hamānā khush āmadash guftār-i ūi / Nabūd āgah az zisht kardār-i ūi” (28; He so welcomed his [the devil’s] words [that] he was not aware of his evil behavior). With his eloquence, Iblīs convinces Żaḥḥāk that he would be a worthy advisor, but makes him swear to obey his advice on becoming king before offering details of the specific advice, taking advantage of Żaḥḥāk’s

31 Nasrin Askari, *The Medieval Reception of the Shāhnāma as a Mirror for Princes* (see note 2), 5.

32 Djalal Khaleghi-Motlagh, “ADAB i. Adab in Iran,” *Encyclopaedia Iranica* 1.4 (1983), 432–39; an updated version is available online at <http://iranicaonline.org/articles/adab-i-iran> (last accessed on April 5, 2019).

33 Khaleghi-Motlagh, “ADAB i. Adab in Iran” (see note 32).

34 Firdawsi et al., *Shāhnāma* (see note 2), 27–28.

35 Firdawsi et al., *Shāhnāma* (see note 2), 28.

aforementioned stupidity and ambition. Žaḥḥāk thus consents to patricide before he even knows rising to the throne would require him to kill his father.<sup>36</sup>

After Žaḥḥāk has killed his father and taken “the Arab crown,” the devil returns in the form of a young man offering his services as a cook, who impresses Žaḥḥāk with his skills in cooking meat and eggs, which fortify Žaḥḥāk’s constitution.<sup>37</sup> He offers to compensate the cook by granting him whatever he requests. In response, the cook only asks to kiss Žaḥḥāk’s shoulders. Upon kissing them, “daw mār-i siyah az daw kitfash birust / ghamī gasht vaz har su’i chārī just” (32; two black snakes rose from his shoulders. It turned painful and he sought help from every corner).<sup>38</sup> Seeking relief from the pain caused by these serpents, “saranjām bi-burīd har daw zi kift” (32; He finally cut both from his shoulder). However, upon their removal, “Chaw shākh-i dirakht ān daw mār-i siyāh / bar āmad digar bārāh az kift-i shah” (32; Like the branch of a tree, those two black snakes rose another time from the shoulders of the king). In the face of the snakes’ reappearance, the available court physicians were left clueless, and the devil took this opportunity to return to the court in the form of a doctor. He then told the king that there was no way of removing the snakes and that instead, feeding them would be the only way to manage the pain they caused.

This account of Žaḥḥāk’s origins distinguishes Firdawsī’s telling from earlier sources. In the pre-medieval Zoroastrian accounts, Žaḥḥāk enters the narrative as a demon, dragon, or descendant of Angra Mainyu, but here, he starts out instead as a human and then acquires his monstrosity when the snakes grow from his shoulders, with his moral and intellectual shortcomings serving as the seeds of his monstrosity. Laurie Pierce notes that “the *Shahnameh*’s narrative of Žaḥḥāk is unique and compelling in its own right” because, unlike the earlier Zoroastrian accounts, Firdawsī’s telling, “portrays the demonic as something the king *becomes*, not as something that he is.”<sup>39</sup> I read, however, this transition as one to monstrosity, instead of a process of ‘demonification,’ as Pierce terms it, because the terms Firdawsī uses to refer to Žaḥḥāk describe him as a human-dragon (or human-serpent) hybrid rather than a demon.<sup>40</sup> While it is not unreasonable to read demonic elements into Žaḥḥāk as Pierce does, the text does not explicitly call him a demon, while it does call him ‘dragon-bodied’ and ‘dragon-natured.’

36 Firdawsī et al., *Shāhnāma* (see note 2), 28–29.

37 Davis, *Shahnameh* (see note 2), 10.

38 Firdawsī et al., *Shāhnāmah* (see note 2), 32.

39 Laurie Pierce, “Serpents and Sorcery: Humanity, Gender, and the Demonic in Ferdowsi’s *Shahnameh*,” *Iranian Studies* 48.3 (2015): 349–67; here 355.

40 Pierce, “Serpents and Sorcery” (see note 39), 355.

To return to this paper's opening question ("a king or a monster?"), it is worth noting that the Persian phrase used in that passage hints at certain monstrous elements Davis's English does not. If we proceed from the assumption that a monster is, among other things, a human-animal hybrid, the Persian phrase "tu shāhī va-gar azhdahā paykarī" suggests this hybridity more strongly: a more literal translation into English would ask not if Żahḥāk is a king or a monster, but instead if he is a king (shāh) or someone 'dragon-bodied' (azhdahā paykar). This term, "azhdahā paykar," also speaks to a certain ambiguity between kingship and its representation, while here it refers directly to Żahḥāk, so it can, according to the *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, also refer to a military banner depicting an azhdahā to frighten opposing forces.<sup>41</sup> Regardless, inasmuch as Żahḥāk fuses kingly and draconic elements and is monstrous in his hybridity; elsewhere, the text describes him as "dragon-natured" ('azhdahā-fash,' 35).

Neither kingship nor the conquest of Iran sate Żahḥāk's bloodlust; as king, "[n]adānast juz-i kashī āmūkhtan / Juz az kushtan u ghārat u sūkhtan" (35; he knew nothing other than wickedness, killing, plunder, and burning). His impulses to destroy, moreover, intersect with his monstrous compulsion to eat: Żahḥāk

Chinān bad kih har shab du mard-i javān chih kihtar chih az tukhmah-yi pahlavān /  
Khurishgar biburdi bih ivān-i shāh vazu sākhtī rah-i darmān-i shāh / bikushtī va magh-  
zash bipardākhtī mar ān azhdahā rā khurish sākhtī.<sup>42</sup>

[(was) so bad that every night, the cook would bring two young men, whether minors or from the seed of champions, to the shah's court in order to make the shah's cure. He would kill them and remove their brain to prepare food to feed that dragon.]

As in the above passage where the devil's culinary abilities make way for Żahḥāk's monstrous transformation, this section links the violent impulses represented by the text's claim he "knew nothing other than wickedness, killing, plunder, and burning" to Żahḥāk's immoderate appetites, here represented by his nightly need to feed his snakes. The text explicitly links his compulsion to eat, the need for a "cure" (the passage's 'darmān') to monstrosity by also calling that cure "feeding the dragon" ("azhdahā rā khurish sākhtī"). In linking his need to feed the dragon to the fact that he was so bad, this passage highlights the connection between Żahḥāk's moral failures as a prince and king and the physical dimension of his monstrosity, the shoulder snakes that serve as the basis for the comparison to a dragon (both in this passage and in the passage where Kāvah asks whether Żahḥāk is a king or a dragon).

<sup>41</sup> Skjærvø et al., "Aždahā," (see note 23).

<sup>42</sup> Firdawsī et al., *Shāhnāmah* (see note 2), 35.

## Magical Women: Arnavāz and Shahrnāz

Žaḥḥāk's evil is not limited to physical violence, either. After his conquest of Iran, Žaḥḥāk corrupts Jamshīd's two daughters (or sisters, depending on the edition of the text), Arnavāz and Shahrnāz, by teaching them magic. The text introduces them as follows: "Daw pākīzah az khānah-yi Jamshīd / Burūn āvaridand larzān chaw bīd" (35; Two pure [ones] from the house of Jamshīd were taken out trembling like a willow [leaf]). These two were "both sisters to Jamshīd's two sisters "Sar-i bānuvān chaw afsar budand" (35; were like officers among ladies). After they were brought to Žaḥḥāk's court, "[b]iparvardishān az rah-i bad khūy / Biāmūkhtishān tunbul u jādū" (35; he trained them in the way of wickedness [and] taught them trickery and magic). In linking women to magic, this element of the story may reflect a similar cultural impulse as the texts and iconography discussed by Albrecht Classen in his contribution to this volume and its introduction. This case may contrast somewhat with Classen's cases, though, as here, magic (jādū) is something that a man teaches women rather than something that originates with women.<sup>43</sup> Once introduced, however, the link between magic and Arnavāz and Shahrnāz does persist without further influence from Žaḥḥāk.<sup>44</sup>

One of the sisters next appears when Žaḥḥāk sees Faraydūn, the hero who eventually defeats him, in a dream, extending the link between women, magic, and dreams. Late one night, while Žaḥḥāk "bi-kh<sup>w</sup>āb andarūn būd bā Arnavāz" (was asleep with Arnavāz), "[c]hinān did kaz shākh-i shāhānshahān / Sih jāngī padīd āmadī nāgahān" (37; thus he saw: that from the branch of kings, three warriors were suddenly coming). One of these, "bi-bālā-yi sarv u bi-chihr-i kīyān" (with the height of a cypress and the visage of a king), who "damān pīsh-i Žaḥḥāk raftī bi-jāng" (went quickly toward Žaḥḥāk for war), "zadī bar sarash gurzah-yi gāv-rang" (37; struck his head with an ox-shaped mace [Faraydūn is famous for wielding an ox-headed mace in Iranian mythology]). When Žaḥḥāk tells Arnavāz of his dream, she first comforts him, assuring him that there are no threats to his power, but then suggests that he summon astrologers (akhtar-shin

<sup>43</sup> See now Albrecht Classen's contribution to this volume.

<sup>44</sup> See also the contributions to *Magic and Magicians in the Middle Ages and the Early Modern Time: The Occult in Pre-Modern Sciences, Medicine, Literature, Religion, and Astrology*, ed. Albrecht Classen. *Fundamentals of Medieval and Early Modern Culture*, 20 (Berlin and Boston: Walter de Gruyter, 2017).

āsān) and priests (mawbidān) to interpret his dream.<sup>45</sup> After this scene, neither woman appears again until Žaḥḥāk's defeat.

Shahrnāz appears by Faraydūn's side when he defeats Žaḥḥāk, but even in assisting against Žaḥḥāk, her association with sorcery remains. When Žaḥḥāk returned to his palace, "bi-dīd ān siyah nargis Shahrnāz / pur az jādūi bā Farīdūn bi-nāz" (59; he saw that black narcissus Shahrnāz, full of magic, hidden with Faraydūn); thus, even when opposing Žaḥḥāk, Shahrnāz still appears "full of magic."<sup>46</sup>

## Killing Barmāyah

Žaḥḥāk's reaction to the priest's interpretation of the dream he has in bed with Arnavāz cements his reputation for violence and distinguishes him from his father, which in turn further presents him in opposition to royal virtue. On first hearing his dream, the assembled astrologers and priests find themselves unable to speak for fear of his reaction to their confirmation of the dream's truth, but eventually, one, Zīrak, first attempts to remind Žaḥḥāk that all kings are mortal, but then identifies the figure who defeated him in his dream as the soon-to-be-born Faraydūn, who would be nursed by the mythical cow Barmāyah.<sup>47</sup> This leads Žaḥḥāk to order a search for Faraydūn in hopes of killing his would-be enemy before he is old enough to rise against him.<sup>48</sup> When Žaḥḥāk's men capture and kill Faraydūn's father, his mother sends Faraydūn into hiding, giving him to the keeper of the meadow where Barmāyah lives. Knowing that Barmāyah would help raise Faraydūn, upon learning of Barmāyah's location, Žaḥḥāk again indulges his violent impulses; although Faraydūn and his mother had already fled, Žaḥḥāk destroys the meadow and kills the cow.

<sup>45</sup> Firdawsī et al., *Shāhnāmah* (see note 2), 38.

<sup>46</sup> In some editions, this couplet concludes "bi-rāz" rather than "bi-nāz." This lends itself to a more obvious translation of "in secret," as *rāz* mainly means "secret" or "hidden," while the most familiar use of *nāz* refers to coquetry rather than hiding or concealment. However, "nāz" can also be used as 'dissimulation.'

<sup>47</sup> Firdawsī et al., *Shāhnāmah* (see note 2), 39–40.

<sup>48</sup> This particular element of the story parallels other myths in which kings order the murder of children who challenge their rule in adulthood, including the Finding of Moses in the Book of Exodus, the Massacre of the Innocents in the New Testament, and Oedipus's abandonment (and intended death by exposure) in ancient Greek tragedy. Editor's note: see also Hartmann von Aue's Middle High German *Gregorius* (ca. 1190), which is indirectly based on the ancient text. See the relevant passage in the Introduction to this volume.

This passage likens Žaḥḥāk to an animal, which may serve as additional evidence of his monstrosity, given that monsters are often figured as human-animal hybrids. On the ‘bad day’ (“bad rūzgar”) when news of Barmāyah and the meadow reached Žaḥḥāk, “Bīāmad pur az kīnah chūn pīl-i mast / Mar ān gāv Barmāyah kard past” (he came, full of malevolence like a furious elephant and crushed that very cow Barmāyah), after which, “[h]amāh har chih dīd andarū char pāy / Bīāfgand u zīshān bipardakht jāy” (42; whatever he saw on four legs, he scattered and finished). In addition to the specific language in this passage describing Žaḥḥāk’s animalistic ferocity, this activity may deepen the contrast between Žaḥḥāk and a virtuous king.

We have already seen that Žaḥḥāk’s consumption of meat occasions his transition from man to monster by creating the conditions under which the devil, disguised as the cook that introduces him to meat-eating, can kiss his shoulders and thereby make serpents grow from them. Additionally, though, in this passage, Žaḥḥāk personally kills a cow, which may represent a definitive break with his father, Mardās, who raised cattle for dairy rather than meat: “mar ū rā zi dūshidānī-yi chār pāy / Zi har yik hizār āmadandī bi-jāy” (of the four-legged creatures fit for milking he had, from each one a thousand would come); his herds, moreover, served as evidence of Mardās’ generosity, as this passage goes on to say he “[b]uz u ushtur u mīsh hamchawnīn / Bi-dūshandīgān dādah bud pāk dīn” (28; that pure one had given [these thousands] to the shepherds whether they were goats, camels, or sheep). Rather than giving them to shepherds for milking, Žaḥḥāk chooses to eliminate all of this same class of animal (four-legged or ‘chār pāy’ beings) from the meadow where Faraydūn had hidden. Thus, the text defines Žaḥḥāk’s relationship to livestock in terms of his murderous drives while it uses the relationship between Mardās and livestock as evidence of his generosity.

## Philosophizing with Žaḥḥāk: What to Make of Monsters

The recent adoption of modern horror fiction by contemporary philosophers associated with speculative realism has granted a new philosophical significance to the language used to describe monsters, and this significance may extend to Žaḥḥāk, if only indirectly. The philosophical adoption of modern horror fiction by thinkers like Eugene Thacker, Graham Harman, and Reza Negarestani has tended toward the ontological; they view it as particularly capable of revealing the limits of human thought and the Real’s ability both to exceed and to intrude upon these limits.

In *In the Dust of This Planet*, Eugene Thacker frames horror writing as a genre that discloses “the unthinkable world,” in which we find “the thought of the unthinkable.”<sup>49</sup> Because philosophical discourse is unable to present such a thought in its own terms, horror can supply figurative language better suited to expressing it. In Thacker’s case, horror serves to depict the collision of the human and non-human worlds represented by the threatening ways that the non-human can take on a life of its own: “we are increasingly more and more aware of the world in which we live as a non-human world, a world outside, one that is manifest i[n] the effects of global climate change, natural disasters, the energy crisis, and the progressive extinction of species worldwide.”<sup>50</sup> For Thacker, H. P. Lovecraft’s cosmic horror is the subgenre most relevant to his project because it depicts humans’ responses to the intrusion of the unknowable or non-human, the “misanthropic” Real, upon human lifeworlds. Thacker employs a famous line from Lovecraft’s article “Supernatural Horror in Literature” (“The oldest and strongest emotion of mankind is fear, and the oldest and strongest kind of fear is fear of the unknown”) in the introduction to his 2011 book *In the Dust of This Planet*.<sup>51</sup> Similarly, Graham Harman, the founder of Object-Oriented Ontology (OOO), has dedicated a book (*Weird Realism*, 2012) to Lovecraft, presenting him as OOO’s literary forebear.<sup>52</sup>

Much of Lovecraft’s oeuvre focuses on presenting the cosmos as, at best, indifferent to humanity, but moreover, all too capable of destroying life and sanity whenever people encounter it. For example, the horror in Lovecraft’s story “The Colour out of Space” is not simply that an alien lifeform lands on earth, kills some of those it encounters, and then drives the survivors insane. Rather, the true horror of the story is that the titular being is completely unrecognizable as a lifeform at all. It has no body as such, and is barely even a color, but is rather only a tint that overtakes the objects it affects. This speaks to some of the central themes of Speculative Realism, which basically posits that objects exist independent of their complete comprehension or perception by human subjects, that objects are nonetheless capable of acting on humans, and that figurative or indirect language *can* best convey the reality of such objects, given their incomplete accessibility to human consciousness or perception.

In *Weird Realism: Lovecraft and Philosophy*, Harman takes Lovecraft’s description of an idol in the story “The Call of Cthulhu” as a jumping off point for

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49 Eugene Thacker, *In the Dust of this Planet*. Horror of Philosophy 1 (Alresford, UK: Zero Books, 2011), 2.

50 Thacker, *In the Dust of This Planet* (see note 49), 2.

51 Thacker, *In the Dust of This Planet* (see note 49), 9.

52 Graham Harman, *Weird Realism: Lovecraft and Philosophy* (Alresford, UK: Zero Books, 2012).



his adoption of Lovecraft in service to OOO. The description he selects reads as follows:

... its impressionistic execution forbade a very clear idea of its nature. It seemed to be a sort of monster, or symbol representing a monster, of a form which only a diseased fancy could conceive. If I say that my somewhat extravagant imagination yielded simultaneous pictures of an octopus, a dragon, and a human caricature, I shall not be unfaithful to the spirit of the thing. A pulpy, tentacled head surmounted a grotesque and scaly body with rudimentary wings; but it was the *general outline* of the whole which made it most shockingly frightful.<sup>53</sup>

The philosophical significance of this description rests in its indirectness; because Lovecraft “downplays” the idol of Cthulhu’s appearance “as merely the result of his own ‘extravagant imagination,’” “evasively terms his description ‘not unfaithful to the spirit of the thing’ rather than dead-on correct,” and “asks us to ignore the surface properties of dragon and octopus mixed with human and to focus instead on the fearsome ‘general outline of the whole,’” Lovecraft produces a gap “between an ungraspable thing and the vaguely relevant descriptions that the narrator is able to attempt.”<sup>54</sup> This gap is central to Lovecraft’s stylistic world, which matters, philosophically, because it is “a world in which (1) real objects are locked in impossible tension with the crippled descriptive powers of language, and (2) visible objects display unbearable seismic torsion with their own qualities.”<sup>55</sup>

For Harman, this world bears a resemblance to Martin Heidegger’s radicalized phenomenology, which, following Heidegger’s tool-analysis, reoriented phenomenology by noting “that we usually deal with things insofar as they *do not* appear,” unlike the original phenomenological project of Heidegger’s mentor Edmund Husserl, whose own call for philosophers to return to the things themselves directed philosophical study to objects as they appear as given to human consciousness.<sup>56</sup>

So, in *Weird Realism*, the Lovecraftian style of description matters philosophically because it reflects the gap between objects and the power of language to describe them. To return to the above-quoted description of an idol of Cthulhu, Harman emphasizes that it is the specific language of the description that highlights the gap between things as they are and things as they can be comprehended by the human subject; simply saying that the idol “looked like a dragon, an octopus, and a human, all rolled into one” would, for Harman,

<sup>53</sup> Howard Philips Lovecraft, “The Call of Cthulhu,” *Tales of the Cthulhu Mythos*, ed. August Derleth (New York: Del Rey Books, 1998), 1–25; here 3.

<sup>54</sup> Harman, *Weird Realism* (see note 52), 24.

<sup>55</sup> Harman, *Weird Realism* (see note 52), 27.

<sup>56</sup> Harman, *Weird Realism* (see note 52), 28.

“ruin the passage.”<sup>57</sup> Speaking more philosophically, a description that leans so heavily on the individual qualities of the idol, could lead to an absurdly Humean account of the idol, which would insist “When we think of Cthulhu, we only join three consistent ideas, *octopus*, *dragon*, and *human*, with which we were formerly acquainted.”<sup>58</sup> It is, instead, the particular language of Lovecraft’s description that “makes us *feel* the difference between an object and its qualities” by framing the description of those qualities as contingent upon a palpable if unspeakable “‘spirit of the thing’ and ‘general outline of the whole’ irreducible to cheerful bundles of octopus, dragon and human.”<sup>59</sup>

## Žaḥḥāk in *Cyclonopedia*

One theorist affiliated with speculative realism (and its adoption of horror), Reza Negarestani, employs Žaḥḥāk as one of the literary devices in *Cyclonopedia*, his 2008 work of theory-fiction. Adopting the basic speculative realist premises discussed above, Negarestani uses *Cyclonopedia* to explore the notion that the Middle East is itself an entity that has, with its material avatars (which include dust, oil, and archaeological remains), been acting on and through humanity for its whole history. In service of this notion, he frames Žaḥḥāk as one manifestation of the “draco-spiral,” a symbol he uses to represent one of the Middle East’s ability to confuse, corrupt, and ensnare humans within itself. For Negarestani, “the dragon, or as in ancient Persian and Babel (Babylonia), *Azhi*,” is “the archeo-demonographical figure of this spiral” (itself a visual rendering of the spiraling “thirst to hunt that exists within each warmachine” and is “the simulation of the radical frenzy of war to hunt all warmachines”; Negarestani borrows the concept of the “war machine” from Deleuze and Guattari, for whom it refers to “a collection of nomad-warriors engaged in resistance to control,” a collection that “is not influenced by the economic and political concerns of the State” and “which bubbles up from common concerns for freedom to move”).<sup>60</sup> He elsewhere terms this figure “the divergent spiral or diffusive axis of Az,” the “cork-screwing motion” of which is based on “spiraling unlocalizability, inexhaustible

<sup>57</sup> Harman, *Weird Realism* (see note 52), 57.

<sup>58</sup> Harman, *Weird Realism* (see note 52), 58.

<sup>59</sup> Harman, *Weird Realism* (see note 52), 58–59.

<sup>60</sup> Reza Negarestani, *Cyclonopedia: Complicity with Anonymous Materials*. Anomaly (Seddon and London, UK: Re.press, 2008), 131. Regarding war machines, see: Davin Heckman, “Glossary,” *Rhizomes* 5, 2002. Available online at <http://www.rhizomes.net/issue5/poke/glossary.html> (last accessed on Dec. 4, 2019).

becomings of perversion, deviations, and insurgent creativities.”<sup>61</sup> Negarestani later gives the name “the Seal of Azhi” to the entanglement of the “strains of the draco-spiral,” fictively attributing this entanglement to a “middle-eastern occult” tradition according to which the Seal “is simultaneously the impossibility of external influence and the movement of the draco-spiral as the blade of impossibility.”<sup>62</sup> Here, it bears noting that in pre-Islamic sources considered Žaḥḥāk an Azhi, Azhi Dahaka.

While Negarestani’s discussion owes more to Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari than it does to Firdawsī, it merits pointing out that actual historical and linguistic scholarship on ancient Persian has highlighted a link between ‘āz’ (“greed”) and Azhis like Azhi Dahāka; this is particularly relevant to this volume in light of Daniel Pigg’s observation regarding the link between dragons and greed in Old English literature.<sup>63</sup> The “Avestan Āzi ... derives from the root āz- ‘Strive for, endeavor to,’” while Middle and New Persian use āz “without mythological significance,” to refer to the psychological, rather than mythological, dimensions of this demon of “Greed, Lust, Avarice, Avidity, Concupiscence,” which is to say that they refer to those vices as “realized in man.”<sup>64</sup> As we saw above, one Middle Persian source said that greed was one of Dahāg’s defects, while other Middle Persian sources also link dragons in general to greed. For example, “in the *Bundahišn* the snake-like (*mār homānāg*) Gōčihr and Mūšparīg with the tail (*dumbōmand*) and wings (*parrwar*) are said to be the evil opponents of the sun, moon and stars. These two harmful beings were bound to the sun so as not to run free and cause harm.”<sup>65</sup> This Guchihir is probably ultimately derived from the Avestan gaociθra, which is “mentioned in connection with Āzi, the demon of greed,” in the Avesta.<sup>66</sup> Elsewhere, the *Bundahishn* also mentions an “evil that is from the seed of Greed (Az) and is a snake,” further contributing to an association between serpentine creatures and greed.<sup>67</sup>

Elsewhere in *Cyclonopedia*, Negarestani includes a version of the Žaḥḥāk myth with some similarities to Firdawsī’s:

<sup>61</sup> Negarestani, *Cyclonopedia* (see note 60), 176.

<sup>62</sup> Negarestani, *Cyclonopedia* (see note 60), 221.

<sup>63</sup> See Daniel Pigg’s contribution to this volume.

<sup>64</sup> Jes Peter Asmussen, “Āz,” *Encyclopaedia Iranica* (see note 3), III.2 (1987): 168–69; an updated version is available online at <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/az-iranian-demon> (last accessed on Dec. 4, 2019).

<sup>65</sup> Skjærvø et al., “Aždahā” (see note 23).

<sup>66</sup> Skjærvø et al., “Aždahā” (see note 23).

<sup>67</sup> Askari, *The Medieval Reception of the Shāhnāma as a Mirror for Princes* (see note 2), 120.

Ashemogha (the false mage, deceiver, imposter, quack), messenger of Ahriman, appears to Zahak, the king of Persia, as a cook who taints the vegetarian Zoroastrian cuisine with meat. As a culinary felon bent on defiling the Persian diet, Ashemogha executes his scheme by secretly adding small quantities of meat to his meals and over time increasing the quantity of meat, then replacing it with human meat so as to get Zahak addicted. After ten years, Ashemogha finally comes up with a cuisine composed entirely of meat, to complete Zahak's initiation into the carnivorous realms. As Ashemogha (the cook) kisses Zahak's shoulders after his initiation (the Gift of Ahriman), two giant worms or snakes grow out of the kiss marks. The pain of the growing worms can only be alleviated by feeding them with human brains of both sexes. The demonic is only attainable by becoming-chef or by returning to the culinary aspects of matter.<sup>68</sup>

In making *Žahhāk* an icon, Negarestani appeals more to a possibly constructed pre-Islamic mythology than to Firdawsī's telling of the myth. While Negarestani's use of *Žahhāk* makes sense in light of his particular theoretical-fictional project, in mine, I have aimed to attend more closely to the actual text of Firdawsī's version of the *Žahhāk* story.

This is, in part, the result of an attempt at a sort of object-oriented thinking; I would argue that attending to the language in my particular object of study is an attempt to recognize the independent existence of that object and let it dictate its own philosophical concerns – if we are to let objects act on us, and if the particular object in question is a text, the text's specific linguistic content may be the closest we can come to a raw material that can exert influence upon us as readers. To that end, my major inspiration from Harman is methodological, in that it has directed me toward a focus on the style in which our monsters are described. These descriptions, however, point us toward different philosophical genres; if, according to Harman, Lovecraft's monsters lend themselves to ontology, Firdawsī's *Žahhāk* lends himself to ethics. I would, moreover, argue that this ethical concern and Ferdowsi's humanization of *Žahhāk*'s origins are historically significant, as they reflect the medieval-Islamic context of the *Shāhnāmāh*'s composition and thereby distinguish this text from its antique-Zoroastrian predecessors.

## Žahhāk as Counter-Sovereign

Identifying *Žahhāk* as a counter-sovereign may be the best way to synthesize these positions. Speaking historically, if we accept the hypothesis that medieval audiences received the *Shāhnāmāh* as a mirror for princes, the text's focus on *Žahhāk*'s many vices suggests that it frames him in opposition to the kings whose virtues it

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<sup>68</sup> Negarestani, *Cyclonopedia* (see note 61), 189.

lauds. Thacker's conception of the counter-sovereign (for him a particular class of demon) may provide an additional link between the *Shāhnāmah* and recent theory. Mardās and his people were pastoralists who mainly subsisted on dairy, but that Žaḥḥāk's meat-eating (to say nothing of his snakes' brain-eating) and killing of the legendary cow Barmāyah represents a break with this lifestyle: Iblīs ingratiates himself with Žaḥḥāk in the form of a cook, who takes to feeding meat to Žaḥḥāk, in the process ending humanity's original vegetarianism. This shift, alongside Žaḥḥāk's other vices, may help frame Žaḥḥāk as a counter-sovereign. Where Mardās was a wise, generous, just, ruler who led his people in a *modus vivendi* that did not necessitate taking life, Žaḥḥāk, the ambitious, patricidal fool, starts living off of the flesh of others.<sup>69</sup>

In *In the Dust of This Planet*, Eugene Thacker takes Dis, the “giant, grotesque, brooding, arch-emperor” in Dante's *Inferno*, who is as “centralized and transcendent to that which he governs” as the divine sovereign, to be the paradigmatic counter-sovereign.<sup>70</sup> Just as Dis is as central to the order of his section of the *Inferno* as the divine sovereign is to Paradise, Žaḥḥāk is as central to this section of the *Shāhnāmah* as the Iranian kings that precede and follow him are to theirs, and like Dis, Žaḥḥāk finds himself led, by his vices, into a “cycle of transgression and blasphemy against the Creator”: he is wrathful, foolish, and gluttonous, where, according to the norms of medieval Persian literature on kingship, kings were expected to be magnanimous, wise, and moderate in their consumption.<sup>71</sup>

While, like Harman, I see our chosen authors' style of description as philosophically significant, in Firdawsī's case, the language tends to emphasize questions of vice and virtue rather than the question of the availability of objects to human subjects (as is the case for Harman's study of Lovecraft). We could easily imagine Firdawsī relying entirely upon the earlier Zoroastrian descriptions, emphasizing Žaḥḥāk's physical qualities and demonic origin, presenting him as “a dragon-like (*aži*) monster with three mouths (*θrizafanəm*), three heads (*θrikamarəδəm*), six eyes (*xšuuāš.ašīm*), with a thousand viles (*hazanrā.yaoxštīm*), very strong (*aš.aojanhəm*), a demonic devil (*daēuuīm drujīm*),” as in the *Avesta*, or, according to the genealogy provided by the *Bundahišn*,

69 See also: Linda Darling, “Mirrors for Princes in Europe and the Middle East: A Case of Historiographical Incommensurability,” *East Meets West in the Middle Ages and Early Modern Times: Transcultural Experiences in the Premodern World*, ed. Albrecht Classen. Fundamentals of Medieval and Early Modern Culture, 14 (Berlin and Boston: Walter de Gruyter, 2013), 223–42.

70 Thacker, *In the Dust of This Planet* (see note 49), 31–32.

71 Thacker, *In the Dust of This Planet* (see note 49), 31–32.

descended from “the Evil Spirit himself.”<sup>72</sup> But, because the *Shāhnāmah* is about how kings are supposed to act and can be situated within the medieval mirrors for princes genre, Firdawsī instead emphasizes the moral dimension to the Žaḥḥāk story and presents Žaḥḥāk as a figure with human origins. In this account, Žaḥḥāk is not descended from “the Evil Spirit himself,” but is instead the ‘nāpāk’ (impure), ‘pisar-i bad’ (bad son) of the ‘pākdil’ (pure-hearted) king Mardās. He is not born a dragon, but instead, snakes rise from his shoulders at a specific point in the narrative, making his body mirror the escalation of his violence. Despite Firdawsī’s reputation for having ‘rescued’ Iran’s pre-Islamic myths following the Islamic conquest of Iran, I would argue that this description of Žaḥḥāk is considerably more Islamic (and therefore medieval) than its Zoroastrian predecessors.

Those predecessors situated Žaḥḥāk within Zoroastrianism’s intricate angelology and demonology and in many cases did not mention Žaḥḥāk’s human origins, or included Ahriman in his genealogy when they did. Firdawsī, meanwhile, gives Žaḥḥāk a specifically human genealogy and situates his evil not in Zoroastrian demonology, but instead, in Žaḥḥāk’s personal shortcomings, and, notably, his deception by the specifically Islamic devil designated by the term Iblīs.

The differences in the descriptions of their monsters may also reflect the differences in genre between Lovecraft and Firdawsī. The late Marxist theorist Mark Fisher once hypothesized that the Lovecraftian Weird could be distinguished from the fantastic on the following grounds: “Fantasy ... is set in Worlds that are entirely different from ours;” if, in some fantasy writing, “there is an egress between this world and the other,” in “Lovecraft, there is an interplay, an exchange between this world and others.”<sup>73</sup> Unlike modern fantasy or horror fiction, though, Firdawsī purported to be writing about this world; even if Žaḥḥāk appears in the first, mythic portion of the *Shāhnāmah* rather than its later historical section (roughly the last third of the text), it still claims to narrate the formation of the world of human history, which also happens to be the location of the conflict between good and evil. This may, in part, be why Žaḥḥāk can be distinguished from other people on ethical grounds rather than ontological ones; unlike a Lovecraftian monster, he is a human too, from the same order of being as other people, and as a result, his monstrosity is the result of his choices, and not the result of the fact that he exists on a completely different cosmic scale than humans as is the case with Iblīs in this text or with Cthulhu in Lovecraft.

<sup>72</sup> Skjærvø et al., “Aždahā” (see note 23).

<sup>73</sup> Mark Fisher, “Lovecraft and the Weird: Part I,” *K-punk* (2007). Available online at <https://k-punk.org/lovecraft-and-the-weird-part-i> (last accessed on Dec. 8, 2019).

Fidel Fajardo-Acosta

## **The Negative Imagination: William IX's Song Exactly About Nothing: "Farai un vers de dreit nien"**

This essay offers an analysis of the early twelfth-century love song and riddle, "Farai un vers de dreit nien" (I will make a song exactly about nothing), composed by William/Guilhem IX, duke of Aquitaine and VII count of Poitiers (1071–1126). The song has been the object of intense scholarly speculation, especially for its challenging audiences to find answers to the puzzles it poses, for its sophisticated engagement of philosophical and religious ideas, and for the surprising (post)modernity of the subject matter. As is characteristic of William, the approach is, at least to some extent, lighthearted and parodic, poking fun at love and lovers, as well as the intellectual pretensions of the clerics of his day. At the same time, however, the song also takes love seriously, expressing a genuine bafflement on the part of the poet regarding the experience of being in love. William's contentious relations with the ecclesiastics of his time explain his interest in the parody of scholastic epistemology and negative theology, but the song also engages those methods to address questions of real concern to the poet in matters of his affective life, the identities of the self and the other, and the determination of personal worth. As for the seeming (post)modernity of the song's subject matter, the study relates it to the evolution of western political and economic power and of an epistemology and ontology, and corresponding theology, marked by a growing sense of the emptiness of the human existence and a profound disenchantment and disillusionment, not only with traditional conceptions of God and the spiritual world, but with the ideologies of love, freedom, and the pursuit of personal happiness through the enjoyment of material goods, all of which were at that time in process of becoming central aspects of western life and culture.

Developing in tandem with the growth and centralization of large political powers and the emergence of market economies in western Europe, such ideologies were meant to support and enable the formation of kingdoms and empires and to enlist and motivate individuals for participation in those enterprises. William, living at the beginning of the courtly era, experienced

firsthand the subjecting, and enthralling, effects of those ideologies, which gave individuals identities and a sense of self-worth, but also made glaringly evident the insignificance and ultimate meaninglessness of human beings vis-à-vis the incipient but already formidable realities of proto-modern empires and nation-states, and the commercial economies that made them possible.<sup>1</sup> In particular, this essay backs the idea that the negativity of the poet's perspectives was influenced by John Scotus Eriugena's *De divisione naturae* (On the Division of Nature), a ninth-century neoplatonic theological treatise known in William's times through the *Clavis physicae* (The Key of Nature) of Honorius Augustodunensis, a popularizer of Eriugena. The intriguing image of the *contraclau* (counterkey) in William's song, as well as its negative approach to the mysteries of love, were likely derived, this study claims, from the *Clavis physicae* of Honorius. Regarding the song's puzzles of geography and identities, the study lends support to Alfred Richard's belief that the mystery beloved is the Angevin lady, Dangerosa Maubergeonne, William's lover around 1114–1116, and that Anjou is a place of special significance and concern for the poet. In addition to textual and historical evidence, these identifications will be backed by a theory of love that relates objects of erotic desire to the cultural and other influence of centers of political power. The allure of a figure like Dangerosa then is seen here as a function of both her own personal charms and the growth and centralization of political authority associated with the early stages of formation of the Angevin empire.

While negativity is a common feature of western modernity and postmodernity, it would not seem compatible with the highly pious and theologically-inclined Middle Ages. As Peter Dinzelbacher has recently argued, however, and as has been demonstrated many times before, the processes of rationalization, intellectualization, abstraction, and desacralization that characterize the modern and postmodern periods, clearly began in the long twelfth century and were only briefly interrupted by the regression of economic and cultural conditions of the late Middle Ages.<sup>2</sup> Even earlier forms of such ideas can be identified

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1 I am very grateful to Albrecht Classen for his encouraging of the writing of this essay and making possible its publication in this volume, as well as its presentation at the 2019 International Symposium on Medieval and Early Modern Culture, "Fantasy and Imagination in the Middle Ages and Early Modern Age," that took place May 2–5, 2019 at the University of Arizona in Tucson.

2 Peter Dinzelbacher, *Structures and Origins of the Twelfth-Century 'Renaissance.'* Monographien zur Geschichte des Mittelalters, 63 (Stuttgart: Anton Hiersemann, 2017). One of the earliest formulations of the understanding of the high Middle Ages as a significant moment of formation of modern western culture is Charles Homer Haskins, *The Renaissance of the Twelfth Century* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1927).



in western history. Medieval naysayers, in effect, indeed existed. In part differing from and in part agreeing with their modern counterparts, however, they tended to deny the meaning not of the spiritual but of the material world, or at least certain aspects of material reality, such as that of evil things. The medieval *contemptus mundi* and the radical Augustinian notion that only God has true existence, while evil, in its myriad earthly manifestations, has none at all, are common aspects of the ideas of the early Middle Ages: “Quo fit ut quae in terriis abundare credentur, si disponentem prouidentiam spectes, nihil usquam mali esse perpendas” (Boethius [ca. 477–524], *De consolazione philosophiae*, 4. P6.57; regarding what happens and what is believed to abound on earth, if you consider the ordering power of Providence, you would find that nothing evil exists anywhere).<sup>3</sup>

It was not until the days of the Carolingian Renaissance in the eighth and ninth centuries – the first substantial effort to reconstitute a western empire since the fall of Rome – that the first manifestations of a “negative theology” emerged, in the ideas of the Irish Neoplatonist philosopher, John Scotus Eriugena (ca. 815–877), notorious for suggesting, in remarkably subtle fashion, that God is *nihil* (nothing) and hence has no existence, at least in the way in which humans understand existence.<sup>4</sup> Negative theology and similar rationalistic approaches, particularly Aristotle-inspired scholasticism, experienced a resurgence during the period variously known as the high Middle Ages, the courtly age, or the long twelfth century (ca. 1050–1250), as the Church and the Holy Roman/German Empire vied for supremacy, the Crusades united Europeans, and the kingdoms that became France, England and Spain began to take shape. Citing the opinion of Eriugena's biographer, Maïeul Cappuyns, Paolo Lucentini characterized the twelfth century as “l'epoca de oro dell'influenza eriugeniana” (the golden age of eriugenian influence).<sup>5</sup> It was also at that time that dialectical methods of argumentation, already seen in Eriugena and going back to the Platonic dialogues, and the Nominalism/Conceptualism of figures like Roscelin

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3 Anicius Manlius Severinus Boethius, *Philosophiae consolatio* [De consolazione philosophiae], ed. Wilhelm Weinberger. Corpus scriptorum ecclesiasticorum Latinorum, 67 (Vienna: Hölder-Pichler-Tempsky, 1934).

4 Johannes Scotus Eriugena, *Periphyseon: De divisione naturae*, in Joannis Scoti, *Opera*, ed. Henricus Josephus Floss. Patrologiae Cursus Completus: Patrologia Latinae, 122 (Paris: J. P. Migne, 1865), cols. 439–1022; id., *Periphyseon (The Division of Nature)*, trans. I. P. Sheldon-Williams. Rev. ed. John J. O'Meara (Montreal and Washington DC: Éditions Bellarmin/Dumbarton Oaks, 1987).

5 Maïeul Cappuyns, *Jean Scot Érigène. Sa vie, son œuvre, sa pensée* (Louvain: Abbaye de Mont-César, 1933); Paolo Lucentini, ed., *Honorius Augustodunensis's Clavis physicae. Temi e Testi*, 21 (Rome: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 1974), v.

(ca. 1050–ca. 1125) and Peter Abelard (ca. 1079–1142) flourished – the latter a type of rationalism/materialism and linguistic relativism denying the existence of abstractions (“universals”) beyond the words denoting them. As Peter Dinzelbacher notes, these methods and ideas constituted the backbone of scholasticism and of the beginnings of a systematic philosophy reflective of the disenchanting view of the world that would become characteristic of the modern age.<sup>6</sup>

Later in the Middle Ages, just as Dante (ca. 1265–1321) was busy pondering the politics of the empire, articulating the early forms of Humanism, and imagining a universe where earthly and spiritual realities could be reconciled, the German mystic Meister Eckhart (ca. 1260–1328) yet again fanned the fires of negative theology, reviving the ideas of Eriugena and flirting with the notion that God is a form of nothingness.<sup>7</sup> Eckart died while awaiting a verdict on charges of heresy. As the Middle Ages gave way to the Renaissance, skepticism about religion and defiance of the authority of the Church became ever more explicit, with empiricism and science gradually displacing religion as the preferred epistemological methods, the pursuit of earthly love and happiness in the here-and-now replacing the concern with God and the afterlife, and an implicitly atheistic and self-serving materialism becoming the fundamental attitude toward life.<sup>8</sup>

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6 “... the beginnings of scholasticism[,] ... [t]his method, based on discourse and discussion, turned out to be a major component in the trend of evolution which was to make available through the teaching of Peter Lombard (a pupil of Abelard), Thomas Aquinas, William Occam ... the intellectual tools by whose employment, eventually, the desacralized world view of the Enlightenment and the present time were to be shaped”: Peter Dinzelbacher, *Structures and Origins* (see note 2), 71. The ideas of Roscelin are known only indirectly from the texts of St. Anselm of Canterbury and those of Peter Abelard. S. Anselmi ex Beccensi Abbate Cantuariensis Archiepiscopi, *Opera Omnia*, ed. D. Grabrielis Gerberon. Patrologiae Cursus Completus: Patrologia Latinae, 158 & 159 (Paris: J. P. Migne, 1863), 158: cols. 141–1208, 159: cols. 9–272. Petri Abaelardi Abbatis Rugensis, *Opera Omnia*, ed. Jacques Paul Migne. Patrologiae Cursus Completus: Patrologia Latinae, 178 (Paris: Garnier Fratres & J. P. Migne Successores, 1885) cols. 113–1852. A fascinating aspect of the simultaneous denial of reality to universals and of the greater use of abstract concepts in the twelfth century is the consequent intensification of the sense of unreality surrounding aspects of human life including notions of kingdom and kingship, money, and even concepts like God, paradise and hell (Dinzelbacher, *Structures and Origins* [see note 2], 101–03).

7 Meister Eckhart, “Von Abgeschiedenheit,” *Die deutschen Werke*. Vol. 5: *Traktate*, ed., trans. Josef Quint (1963; Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1987), Middle High German text: 401.1–34.4, and Modern German translation: 539.1–47.12; id., “On Detachment,” in *The Complete Mystical Works of Meister Eckhart*, ed., trans. Maurice O’Connell Walshe. Rev. ed. (New York: Herder & Herder/Crossroad Publishing Co., 2009), 566–75.

8 “Undoubtedly, European thinking between the end of the Roman Empire and our present evolved from a world view absolutely dominated by religious categories to one without any

Indeed, as Albrecht Classen has noted recently, a veritable “crisis of spirituality,” caused and precipitated by the corruption of the orthodox Church, was continuous from at least the twelfth century into the days of the Reformation: “the Protestant Reformation was only the final culmination point in a process the beginning of which can be traced back even several hundreds of years, at least to the high Middle Ages.”<sup>9</sup> Reformed religion, however, as Max Weber suggested, denied the idea that charitable love could lead to salvation and could not be distinguished from self-serving material pursuits, pecunious accumulation becoming synonymous with moral virtue and even the likelihood of spiritual salvation.<sup>10</sup> Accordingly, rather than usher in a new era of spirituality, the Reformation was the cause of intensified materialism, bitter violence, and ever greater disenchantment. As Classen observes in his analysis of literary sources, by the Baroque period, writers like Andreas Gryphius (1616–1664) expressed deep concern about not just the material devastation but also the profound spiritual consequences of events like the Thirty Years’ War.<sup>11</sup>

In such a context of declining spirituality and growing materialism, a contemporary of Roscelin and Abelard, the very first of the known European poets composing in the Romance languages, the Occitan aristocrat and troubadour William IX, duke of Aquitaine and VII count of Poitiers (1071–1126), authored an intriguing love song, “Farai un vers de dreit nien” (I will make a song exactly about nothing), which, as suggested by the opening line/title, claims to be void of subject matter or meaning. Beyond its surface presumption of nothingness, however, the song is clearly about secret amorous affairs and very carnal forms of love, not unlike the passion of Abelard for Héloïse. Understandably, given its

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metaphysics (Max Weber’s ‘Entzauberung’). Though it was only with Feuerbach, Darwin, Freud and their like-minded contemporaries that atheism begun [sic] to wax the dominant insight into the world’s structure, it must be stressed that this cognition appeared for the first time after antiquity, during the epoch in question. In a parallel manner, already in the high middle ages also a few began to doubt or negate the soul’s immortality”: Dinzelbacher, *Structures and Origins* (see note 2), 119; also id., *Unglaube im “Zeitalter des Glaubens.” Atheismus und Skeptizismus im Mittelalter* (Badenweiler: Wissenschaftlicher Verlag Bachmann, 2009).

**9** Albrecht Classen, “The Crisis of Spirituality in the Late Middle Ages: From the Twelfth Century to the Protestant Reformation; with an Emphasis on the *Reformatio Sigismundi* (1439),” *Global Journal of Human-Social Science: D, History, Archaeology & Anthropology* 19.2 (2019): 7–16; here 8; online at [https://globaljournals.org/GJHSS\\_Volume19/2-The-Crisis-of-Spirituality.pdf](https://globaljournals.org/GJHSS_Volume19/2-The-Crisis-of-Spirituality.pdf).

**10** Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, trans. Talcott Parsons (1904; New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons; London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1930); originally, “Die protestantische Ethik und der Geist des Kapitalismus,” *Archiv für Sozialwissenschaft und Sozialpolitik* 20 (1904): 1–54, 21 (1905): 1–110.

**11** Classen, “Crisis of Spirituality” (see note 9), 15–16.

unusual and contradictory claims of being about nothing and also about love, William's song has attracted a great deal of scholarly attention. As Albrecht Classen has pointed out, the song is evidence of the fact that the conceits of post-modernism are nothing new, and that the strategies and methods of thought and cognition that we associate with the post-Nietzschean and post-Wittgensteinian intellectual milieus were already en vogue in the literary products of the early twelfth century, and even earlier in the meditations of philosophers of Platonist and Neoplatonist persuasions.<sup>12</sup>

Along those lines, this essay proposes that a seemingly silly song, composed by a clever medieval poet trying to be original and wilfully saying shocking things for entertainment effect, may turn out to have significant value in the understanding of the journey of the western mind from the *contemptus mundi* of late antiquity and the early Middle Ages to a different sort of *contemptus mundi*, lacking in spiritual dimensions, manifested in a nihilism common to the medieval and the (post)modern mind. Such a journey appears to have proceeded from a nihilism of the flesh to a nihilism of the spirit, and then to a totalizing nihilism of spirit and flesh that already afflicted medieval subjects like William and that has also produced jaded postmoderns wandering aimlessly amidst the fragments of what they assume to be a hopelessly crumbling world. Ironically then, in their exclusive assertion of sensory, material phenomena and the denial of spiritual realities, modern intellectual methods have resulted in the ever more narrow particularizing of the understanding of existence and a corresponding sense of the futility and meaninglessness of a human life believed to be irremediably transient and finite, dust doomed to return to the dust.

As for the reasons why negativity is manifested in such different historical periods as the (post)modern age, the Carolingian period, and the High Middle Ages, this essay proposes it is a result of the interactions, experiences, ideas, affects, and perceptions of humans living in steeply hierarchical and highly organized, but also predatory, violent, and materialistic social groups focused on the pursuit of power, property, and prestige. Though the cultures and history relevant to this study are clearly those of western peoples, the findings are equally applicable to other peoples of the world, who, under the right circumstances, would and do organize themselves into similarly aggressive and predatory tribes, kingdoms, nations, states, empires, and other such corporate entities. There is in effect much in common, as noted already by Thorstein Veblen, between feudal

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<sup>12</sup> Albrecht Classen, "Die Erfahrung mit dem Nichts und dem Unsinn: Poetologische, fast schon postmoderne Experimente im Mittelalter: Der Troubadour Guillaume le Neuf, mittelhochdeutsche Sangspruchdichtung des 13. Jahrhunderts und Vertreter der 'Volkslieddichtung' des 16. Jahrhunderts," *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen* 113.2 (2012): 145–63; here 146.

Europe and feudal Japan, both “barbarian” cultures where force and brutal seizure of human beings and other forms of property carried honorific value.<sup>13</sup>

We could also add that there are indeed uncanny resemblances between the culture of courtly, medieval Europeans and that of postmodern peoples of east and west, and that those resemblances are not accidental but are instead related to the reality of large-scale political entities dwarfing the individual and putting into question its very existence and significance. Living as we do in times of global-scale powers, wholesale reconfigurations of identities, sexualities, values, and desires, and also deep concerns over matters of privacy, spying, and vanishing freedoms, rather than an obstacle to our understanding of the past, our distressed postmodernity may very well put us in a good position to appreciate the discontents attendant to the subjectivities of courtly people such as our poet, known in the chansonniers simply as the *coms de Peitieux*.<sup>14</sup>

## In and Out of the Void: William IX's “Farai un vers de dreit nien”

In spite of his high rank, prominent social position and very large domains, as duke of Aquitaine and count of Poitiers, William IX experienced first hand the pressures of subjection and identity formation, as well as affective and erotic reeducation, that shaped the modern subjectivity and prepared medieval peoples for participation in the large enterprises of the only then emerging kingdoms and empires that eventually became the European nation-states. The

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**13** Thorstein Veblen, *The Theory of the Leisure Class* (1899; New York: Dover Thrift Editions/Dover Publications Inc., 1994), 1. As also noted by Veblen, the intensification of the predatory and violent aspects of the values and ways of life of a human group is a result of the development of its technology, which makes possible more effective predation and exploitation of others: “Predation cannot become the habitual, conventional resource of any group or any class until industrial methods have been developed to such a degree as to leave a margin worth fighting for, above the subsistence of those engaged in getting a living. The transition from peace to predation therefore depends on the growth of technical knowledge and the use of tools” (12). For recent efforts to identify similarities and parallels between the Japanese and German Middle Ages, see *Japanisch-deutsche Gespräche über Fremdheit im Mittelalter: Interkulturelle und interdisziplinäre Forschungen in Ost und West*, ed. Manshu Ide and Albrecht Classen. Stauffenburg Mediävistik, 2 (Tübingen: Stauffenburg, 2018).

**14** On the substantial similarities between medieval courtly culture and postmodernity see Classen, “Die Erfahrung mit dem Nichts” (see note 12), particularly the discussion there of William’s “Farai un vers de dreit nien” and other works (150–54).

transformation of relatively unruly and independent agents into self-regulated and well-motivated subjects capable of functioning in disciplined and productive ways within large political structures was not, however, without its discontents, especially as it required a form of othering of the self by the self, the acceptance of the implantation in the mind and heart of an internalized mediator (in the terminology of Girard), a special form of superego (in the Freudian language), acting continuously as guide, judge, and even executioner of the subjected individual.<sup>15</sup>

The ideologies of *cavalaria*, *fin'amor*, and *cortesía* – the Occitan terms for chivalry, refined/courtly love, and courtesy – not to speak of the crusading ethos, played a central role in those processes, challenging prior mentalities and necessarily dislocating identities and subject positions.<sup>16</sup> Earning a dignified identity and status within the emerging order was not a simple matter, as it required adherence to stringent protocols and codes of conduct, dutiful service to a variety of lords and overlords, and structured participation in a complex social life rife with competition and intrigue. The imperatives of contributing to the projects of overlords, formalized in feudal obligations of military service and counsel, and larger-scale adventures such as crusades, imposed significant economic and psychic costs on the subjects of European courtly societies. Failure to participate in such endeavors resulted in dishonor and shame, effective forms of identity degradation, and loss of favor in courtly circles, which would necessarily also result in economic loss, potentially exile and even

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15 On the structures of triangular desire and internal mediation, see René Girard, *Deceit, Desire, and the Novel: Self and Other in Literary Structure*, trans. Yvonne Freccero (1961; Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1965), 1–52.

16 On the civilizing functions of the ideologies of chivalry and courtesy, see Gerald A. Bond, *The Loving Subject: Desire, Eloquence, and Power in Romanesque France*. The Middle Ages Series (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1995); C. Stephen Jaeger, *The Origins of Courtliness: Civilizing Trends and the Formation of Courtly Ideals, 939–1210*. The Middle Ages Series (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1985); R. Howard Bloch, *Medieval French Literature and Law* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 1977); Norbert Elias, *The Civilizing Process*. Vol. 1: *The History of Manners*, trans. Edmund Jephcott (1939; New York: Pantheon, 1978); Johan Huizinga, *The Waning of the Middle Ages: A Study of the Forms of Life, Thought and Art in France and the Netherlands in the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries*, trans. F. Hopman (1919; Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1955; London: Edward Arnold, 1924). For a critique especially of Elias's thesis regarding the civilization process, see Albrecht Classen, "Naked Men in Medieval German Literature and Art: Anthropological, Cultural-Historical, and Mental-Historical Investigations," *Sexuality in the Middle Ages and Early Modern Times: New Approaches to a Fundamental Cultural-Historical and Literary-Anthropological Theme*, ed. Albrecht Classen. Fundamentals of Medieval and Early Modern Culture, 3 (Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2008), 143–69.

death. The energies required to survive and the stresses of such a way of life cannot be exaggerated, especially in the context of a heightened sense of individuality (however imaginary the autonomy of the "individual"), self-awareness (or self-misunderstanding), and the experience of maddeningly intense, previously unsuspected desires, especially those of an erotic nature.

Positing forbidden, adulterous love as the supreme *desideratum*, courtly culture challenged all manner of existing traditions and modes of self-understanding by stimulating and exploiting an impossible desire that could only be resolved in the sacrifice of the individual to the invisible powers from which such desires originated. To love, to serve, and to die in the service of that love were all one. And the danger, the necessity of that death lurked everywhere, as all competed over the same tantalizing and ever-elusive object of desire. Ironically, the greatest danger of all was the exposure of the shared longing and goal, the revelation of one's hidden passion for the prohibited lady sought by everyone. Thus, *lauzengiers*, scandal-mongers quick to spread gossip and rumors in response to any missteps on the part of a courtier, stood by at every corner and behind every curtain, or at least it felt that way, and ensured swift dissemination of any relevant (mis) information. Both real and imagined, the *lauzengiers* embodied the fear attendant to life under conditions of intense and mutual surveillance, which necessarily resulted in, not always unfounded, paranoias.<sup>17</sup>

Identified with the historical figure of William IX (1071–1126), duke of Aquitaine and VII count of Poitiers, the first of the known troubadours found himself from the start of his life cast into the hurricane of the courtly existence, a life perhaps best characterized by Dante's description of the torments of the lustful in the second circle of hell, "la bufera infernal che mai non resta" [the infernal storm that never rests] (*Inferno* V.31).<sup>18</sup> Best known for their irreverent

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17 Accordingly, Sarah Kay sees the fear of the *lauzengiers* as a psychological manifestation of the tensions between competing secular and ecclesiastical powers: "The Contradictions of Courtly Love and the Origins of Courtly Poetry: The Evidence of the *Lauzengiers*," *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 26 (1996): 209–53.

18 William/Guilhem IX (Graf von Poitiers/Io Coms de Peiteus) is listed as author No. 183 in Alfred Pillet and Henry Carstens, *Bibliographie der Troubadours*. Bibliography and Reference Series, 166 (1933; New York: Burt Franklin, 1968), 155–58; reprint of Issue no. 3 of *Schriften der Königsberger Gelehrten Gesellschaft Sonderreihe* (Halle an der Saale: Max Niemeyer, 1933). Editions of his songs include Gerald A. Bond, ed., trans., *The Poetry of William VII, Count of Poitiers, IX Duke of Aquitaine*. Garland Library of Medieval Literature, Series A, 4 (New York and London: Garland, 1982); Frede Jensen, *Provençal Philology and the Poetry of Guillaume of Poitiers*. Études romanes de l'Université d'Odense, 13 (Odense: Odense University Press, 1983). Martin de Riquer, ed., trans., *Los trovadores: Historia literaria y textos*, 3 vols. (Barcelona: Editorial Planeta, 1975), I:105–41; Nicolò Pasero, ed., trans., *Guglielmo IX*

bawdiness, at times blatant obscenity, several of the songs of William are characterized by shameless bragging about sexual escapades, adulterous affairs, and unbelievable anecdotes, including that of his being mauled by a ferocious red cat before being allowed to have sex with two ladies, one-hundred-and-eighty-eight times, over the course of a week, as per his estimation of his own prowess.<sup>19</sup> Such hyperbole, mixed with oddly contradictory references to experiences of impotence, failure, pain, illness and loss, in this and other songs, is suggestive of the intensity of a life unfolding under extreme stresses similarly stressing the meanings of the imaginative fantasies by which they were represented.<sup>20</sup>

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*d'Aquitania: Poesie* (Rome: Società Tipografica Editrice Modenese (S.T.E.M.)-Mucchi, 1973); R. T. [Raymond Thompson] Hill and T. G. [Thomas Goddard] Bergin, eds., *Anthology of the Provençal Troubadours*, 2nd ed. by Thomas G. Bergin with collaboration of Susan Olson, William D. Paden, Jr., and Nathaniel Smith. 2 vols. Yale Romanic Studies, Second Series, 23 (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1973), 1: 1–10, 2: 5–9; Aurelio Roncaglia, ed., *Venticinque poesie dei primi trovatori: Guillem IX, Marcabru, Jaufre Rudel, Bernart de Ventadorn*. Istituto di Filologia Romanza della Università di Roma. Testi e manuali, 28 (Modena: Società Tipografica Editrice Modenese [S.T.E.M.] Mucchi, 1949), 11–23; Carl Appel, ed., *Provenzalische Chrestomathie*, 5th ed. (Leipzig: O. R. Reisland, 1920), 51–52, 80, 94–96; Alfred Jeanroy, ed., trans., *Les Chansons de Guillaume IX, Duc d'Aquitaine (1071–1127)*, 2nd rev. ed. (1913; Paris: Champion, 1927); id., “Les Poésies de Guillaume IX, Comte de Poitiers,” *Annales du Midi* 17.66 (1905): 161–217; Erhard Lommatzsch, ed., *Provenzalisches Liederbuch* (Berlin: Weidmannsche Buchhandlung, 1917), 3–9; Karl Bartsch, ed., *Chrestomathie Provençale (Xe–XVe siècles)*, 6th ed. by Eduard Koschwitz (Marburg an der Lahn: Elwert, 1904; Elberfeld: R. L. Friderichs, 1868), cols. 31–36; Karl Bartsch, ed., *Provenzalische Lesebuch* (Elberfeld: R. L. Friderichs, 1855), 44–48; Wilhelm Ludwig Holland and Heinrich Adelbert von Keller, eds., *Die Lieder Guillems IX, Grafen von Peitieu, Herzogs von Aquitanien*, 2nd ed. (1848; Tübingen: L. F. Fues, 1850); and François J. M. Raynouard, ed., *Choix des poésies originales des troubadours*, 6 vols. (Paris: Didot, 1816–21), Vol. 5 (1820): 115–21; Henri Pascal de Rochegude, ed., *Parnasse Occitanien, ou, Choix de poésies originales des troubadours* (Toulouse: Benichet Cadet, 1819), 1–2. Italian text in Dante Alighieri, *The Divine Comedy of Dante Alighieri*, with translation and comment by John D. Sinclair. 3 vols. (1939; Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 1961), 1: 74.

**19** The anecdote of the red cat, which also involves severe injuries, and likely venereal disease, is told in “Farai un vers, pos mi sonelh”: 183.12 in Pillet and Carstens, *Bibliographie* (see note 19); song 5 in Bond, *Poetry of William* (see note 19) and in Pasero, *Guglielmo IX* (see note 19). F. R. P. Akehurst, “William IX and (Un)Bridled Passion: Did William have the Pox?,” in *The Spirit of the Court*, ed. Glyn S. Burgess and Robert A. Taylor (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1985), 23–30.

**20** “Ben vueil que sapchon li pluzor” is a song also mixing extreme boasting of mastery and skill in many different activities, along with admission of, supposedly temporary, impotence and failure to meet expectations in a courtly game: 183.2 in Pillet and Carstens, *Bibliographie* (see note 19); song 6 in Bond, ed., *Poetry of William* (see note 19) and in Pasero, ed., *Guglielmo IX* (see note 19). On references to impotence, see David Rollo, “Sexual Escapades and Poetic Process: Three Poems by William IXth of Aquitaine,” *Romanic Review* 82 (1990): 293–311. In a



Though not seemingly connected with his usual subject matter, William's "Farai un vers de dreit nien" (I will make a song exactly about nothing) is no less baffling than his songs that claim to be about something, and no less revealing of the crisis of meanings and identities that confronted courtly subjects of the late eleventh and early twelfth centuries.<sup>21</sup> The singer/speaker in the poem is directly identified with the poet/composer himself via the claim that he is in the process of crafting the very song he is singing, "farai un vers" (ll. 1; I will make a song), which, he says, "fo trobatz en durmen / sus un chivau" (ll. 5–6; was composed while sleeping on a horse). On the surface, the song expresses a series of contradictory ideas that seem to be whimsical, playful reversals of commonplaces of love poetry, such as the *topos* of the forlorn lover singing of love, of the beauty and virtues of his lady, and of his pain and dejection in her absence. In addition to the claim of empty subject matter, the song is notable for the peculiar attitude of indifference of the speaker who claims not to care about his own distress, fairly explicitly admitting he feels mentally and

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poignant farewell song, "Poz de chantar m'es pres talenz," the speaker laments what appears to be his own impending death and the many troubles he anticipates for his heir: 183.10 in Pillet and Carstens, *Bibliographie* (see note 19); song 11 in Bond, *Poetry of William* (see note 19) and in Pasero, *Guglielmo IX* (see note 19).

21 "Farai un vers de dreit nien," 183.7 in Pillet and Carstens, *Bibliographie* (see note 19), 157; song 4 in Bond, *Poetry of William* (see note 19), 14–17, 63–64 (Bond dates the song after 1106 [63]); song 4 in Jensen, *Provençal Philology* (see note 19), 87–147; song 4 in Pasero, *Guglielmo IX* (see note 19), 83–112; piece 3 in Hill and Bergin, *Anthology* (see note 19), 1: 2–3, 2: 7; song 1 in Roncaglia, *Venticinque poesie* (see note 19), 13–14; song 4 in Jeanroy, *Les Chansons de Guillaume IX* (see note 19), 6–8; piece 39 in Appel, *Provenzalische Chrestomathie* (see note 19), 80; song 3 in Lommatzsch, *Provenzalische Liederbuch* (see note 19), 4; song 7 in Holland and Keller, *Die Lieder Guillems IX* (see note 19), 22–24; song 3 in Bartsch, *Provenzalisches Lesebuch* (see note 19), 46–47; Rochegude, *Parnasse Occitanien* (see note 19), 1–2. Friedrich Christian Diez offered a partial translation and noted that the work "ist ein Lied von ganz eigenthümlicher Art. Der Dichter scheint die träumerische Stimmung einer Gleichgültigkeit ausdrücken zu wollen, die keines Eindruckes fähig ist und nur ein dunkles Bewusstsein gestattet; man möchte ihm glauben, wenn er sein Lied eine Geburt des Traumes nennt": *Leben und Werke der Troubadours: Ein Beitrag zur nähern Kenntniss des Mittelalters*. 2nd Edition by Karl Bartsch (Zwickau: Verlag Gebrüder Schumann, 1829; Leipzig: Johann Ambrosius Barth, 1882), 7–8. Claude-Charles Fauriel translated the first stanza and characterized the song as "extravagante," also noting, "la pièce a sept autres stances symétriques à celle-là, toutes de même composées d'expressions contradictoires, associées dans l'unique intention d'offrir à l'esprit une suite d'idées ou d'images disparates, capables de le surprendre et de l'amuser un moment, par leur extravagance déguisée sous un air sérieux": *Histoire de la poésie provençale*. 3 vols. (Geneva: Slatkine Reprints, 1969; Paris: Jules Labitte 1846), 1: 472–73. The song is preserved in two fourteenth-century manuscripts: MS C, *Chansonnier C*, Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, Fr. 856, Folios 230v–31r and MS E, *Chansonnier Provençal E*, Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, Fr. 1749, Folio 114.

emotionally vacant and lacking knowledge even of the time of his birth or whether he is awake or asleep. He attributes his condition to some sort of witchcraft that was practiced against him on a “pueg au” (l. 12; high hill). He acknowledges that he is suffering from a broken heart and feeling as if he will die, unless healed by a skilled physician, but says he doesn’t care about that either. He further specifies he has an “amigua” (l. 25; lady lover), but denies ever having seen her or actually caring about her actions toward him, mysteriously taking a jab at the French and the Normans in the course of making those statements (ll. 29–30).

Even more surprisingly, he claims to love another lady who is more beautiful, nobler, and worthier than his *amigua*. He says he does not know where that other lady dwells but tells us she has done him a great and unspeakable wrong and he is very upset that she remains where she is and that he has to go there. He closes the song stating he will transmit it to someone who will transmit it to someone else in Anjou (Ms. C, l. 46) or in Poitou (Ms. E, l. 46), who will in turn send to him the “contraclau” (Ms. C, l. 48; counterkey), or “la sua clau” (Ms. E, l. 48; her key) to her *estui/estug* (Ms. C, l. 47; lockbox) or her *escut* (Ms. E, l. 47; shield).<sup>22</sup>

The parody of courtly love ideas is pointed and, in itself, an odd situation, as William is the first of the known troubadours, but his song implies the genre had existed for quite some time and had already become clichéd and tiresome, enough to warrant someone wanting to be clever by making fun of it all in a seemingly absurd song.<sup>23</sup> As has been extensively discussed, the poetry of William, in effect, did not emerge in a vacuum and was clearly both derived

22 Pasero, *Guglielmo IX* (see note 19), 111 n. 46, suggests the manuscript variants may very well correspond to differences in performance in different situations and for different audiences.

23 “Il n’est pas impossible, mais il n’est pas probable que la pièce citée du comte de Poitiers ait été la première, et comme le modèle du genre. D’ailleurs, le fût elle, cet indice d’un certain besoin de distractions d’esprit bizarres et recherchées pourrait être pris pour une preuve de l’existence déjà alors assez ancienne de la poésie sérieuse des troubadours”: Fauriel, *Histoire* (see note 22), 1: 473. Peter Dronke noted that the song “is a deliberate burlesque of the poetic conventions of *amour courtois*, which must have been in full flower for his joke to have had a point”: “Guillaume IX and Courtoisie,” *Romanische Forschungen* 73.3 (1961): 327–38; here 327. Cf. L. T. Topsfield: “Beneath the jests of the burlesque poetry Guilhem reveals a sophisticated intelligence and a humorously ironical attitude to themes and rhetorical devices which were to become traditional with later troubadours, and especially with Marcabru, but which must have been already established at the time that he was writing”: “The Burlesque Poetry of Guilhem IX of Aquitaine,” *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen* 69.2 (1968): 280–302; here 299–300. Also seeing the song as a parody of, and reference to, an existing poetic tradition: Salvatore Battaglia, *La coscienza letteraria del Medioevo*. Collana di testi e di critica, 2 (Naples, Liguori, 1965), 299. William E. Burgwinkle, “Troubadour Song and the Art of Juggling,” *Pacific Coast Philology* 26. 1–2 (1991): 13–25: “in this song he is clearly responding to, and mocking, a tradition which precedes him and within which he works” (18).

from, and a reaction to, the Latin love poetry and epistolary rhetoric employed by ecclesiastics in their supposedly Platonic exchanges with noble women. The cases of Peter Damian and Empress Agnes (William's aunt), Peter Abelard and Héloïse, the writers of the Loire School, like Baudri of Bourgueil and Hildebert of Lavardin, who wrote in praise of Adèle of Blois (daughter of William the Conqueror and mother of Stephen of Blois, King of England), and Marbode of Rennes, not to speak of Robert d'Arbrissel and his marginally chaste relationships with the women he sheltered at Fontevrault, including William's wives, embody the reality of a spiritualized erotic discourse and practices that were clearly very irritating, and also a cause of envy, to secular lords like William. The latter, according to William of Malmesbury, expressed a desire to found an *abbatiam pellicum* [convent of prostitutes] to compete with Robert's establishment.<sup>24</sup> Songs like "Farai un vers de dreit nien" strongly suggest that secular

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24 The writers of the so-called School of Angers or Loire School, Baudri of Bourgueil, Hildebert of Lavardin, and Marbode of Rennes, along with the patronage and inspiration of Adèle of Blois, and also the activity of the preacher, Robert d'Arbrissel, were significant manifestations of the formation of new subjectivities associated with a rhetoric of Platonic love and desire involving clerics and noble women: Bond, *Loving Subject* (see note 16), 42–69, 70–98, 137–41, 156–57; and id., "Iocus Amoris: The Poetry of Baudri of Bourgueil and the Formation of the Ovidian Subculture," *Traditio* 42 (1986): 143–93. Corrado Bologna and Tiziana Rubagotti, "Talia dictabat noctibus aut equitans': Baudri de Bourgueil o Guglielmo IX d'Aquitania?," *Critica del Testo* 1.3 (1998): 891–917, suggest the poetry of William was a parody of the Loire School and Baudri of Bourgueil in particular. Lynne Lawner, "Norman ni Frances," *Cultura Neolatina* 30 (1970): 223–32, interprets William's "Farai un vers de dreit nien" as a friendly attack on, and parody of, the Platonism and "negative theology" of the poets of the Loire School (228); also id., "Notes Toward an Interpretation of the *vers de dreit nien*," *Cultura Neolatina* 28 (1968): 147–64; here 149, 151–52. Reto R. Bezzola discusses Peter Damian, Baudri, Marbode, and Hildebert as significant Latin authors whose writings anticipated and exhibited evident parallels with the language, rhetoric and conceits of courtly love, as well as the figure or Robert d'Arbrissel: "Guillaume IX et les origines de l'amour courtois," *Romania* 66 (1940–41): 145–237; here 165–66, 185–207, 209–10. On the Latin origins of European love poetry, see, Peter Dronke, *Medieval Latin and the Rise of European Love-Lyric*. 2nd ed. 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968). Both wives of William, Ermengarde of Anjou and Philippa-Mathilda of Toulouse, retired to Fontevrault, in 1112 and 1116 respectively: Bond, *Poetry of William* (see note 19), xxxvii–xl; Alfred Richard, *Histoire des comtes de Poitou*. 2 vols. (Paris: Picard, 1903), Vol 1, p. 438, 447, 472–73, 504. Discussing the difficult relationship of William with the ecclesiastics of his time, Lawner writes: "Particularly marked was the quarrel between the Count and the great reformer Robert d'Arbrissel, a Breton by birth, who encouraged the cohabitation of monks and nuns, practiced the ancient custom of the Encratites (what becomes the Provençal rite of 'assag') in order to test himself and others against the temptations of lust, and drew on the Angevin and Poitevin nobility in order to form his entourage. Robert attracted both of Guilhem IX's wives, and it seems that the Count projected the construction of an abbey for prostitutes at Niort quite likely in mockery of Robert's known

courtly poetry in the vernacular languages originated in efforts at satire, imitation of, and competition with the work of clerics of this sort vying with secular aristocrats for the attention of courtly women.

Efforts to interpret the song have been numerous and feature many different claims, including the ideas that the song is not serious at all and constitutes deliberately non-sensical verse in the style of the genres known as *fatrasie* or *coq-a-l'âne*;<sup>25</sup> that it is a parody, from the perspective of the *amor de cavalier* (a knight's physical love and desire for a lady), mocking the supposedly Platonic *amor de clerc* (love practiced by a monk or other ecclesiastic), the poetic conceits and amorous conventions associated with figures like Ebles II of Ventadorn, the moralizing of poets like Marcabru and the over-spiritualized *amor de lonh* (love from afar) associated with figures like Jaufre Rudel;<sup>26</sup> that it is a *devinalh* (riddle) with or without specific answers;<sup>27</sup> that it is a philosophical reflection informed by

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attempts to save fallen women, what we might call his 'Magdalene complex': "Norman ni Frances" (see this note above), 229–30. That William was ever married to Ermengarde of Anjou (ca. 1069–1147) has been contested, though not decisively, by Ruth E. Harvey, "The Wives of the 'First Troubadour,' Duke William IX of Aquitaine," *Journal of Medieval History* 19 (1993): 307–25. William of Malmesbury, *Gesta Regum Anglorum* V.439, in Bond, *Poetry of William* (see note 19), xxxix, 120.

25 Alfred Jeanroy, "Les genres lyriques secondaires dans la poésie provençale du XIV<sup>e</sup> siècle," in *Studies in French Language and Mediaeval Literature Presented to Professor Mildred K. Pope* (1939; Freeport, NY: Books for Libraries Press, 1969), 209–214; here 213–14, and 214 note 3.

26 Dronke, "Guillaume IX and Courtoisie" (see note 25), 327–38; Battaglia, *La coscienza letteraria* (see note 25), 229; Topsfield, "Burlesque Poetry" (see note 25), 293–96. Pasero, *Guglielmo IX* (see note 19), 85–90. Maria Dumitrescu, "Eble II de Ventadorn et Guillaume IX d'Aquitaine," *Cahiers de civilisation médiévale* 11 (1968): 379–412. Roy Rosenstein, "Les années d'apprentissage du troubadour Jaufre Rudel: De 'escola N'Eblo à la segura escola," *Annales du Midi* 100 (1988): 7–15. Roberta Manetti and Sergio Vatteroni, "Osservazioni sul primo trovatore," *La lirica romanza del Medioevo: Storia, tradizioni, interpretazioni. Atti del VI convegno triennale della Società Italiana di Filologia Romanza, 27 Settembre – 1 Ottobre 2006*, ed. Furio Brugnolo and Francesca Gambino. 2 vols. (Padua and Stra, Italy: Unipress, 2009), 17–58.

27 Dimitri Scheludko, "Beiträge zur Entstehungsgeschichte der altprovenzalischen Lyrik," *Archivum Romanicum* 15 (1931): 137–206; Leo Spitzer, *L'amour lointain de Jaufre Rudel* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1944), 25. Dietmar Rieger, *Der 'vers de dreyt nien' Wilhelms IX von Aquitanien: rätselhaftes Gedicht oder Rätselgedicht?: Untersuchung zu einem 'Schlüsselgedicht' der Trobadordlyrik*. Sitzungsberichte der Heidelberger Akademie der Wissenschaften, Philosophisch-Historische Klasse, 3 (Heidelberg: Winter, 1975). Nicolò Pasero, "'Devinalh', 'non-senso' e 'interiorizzazione testuale': osservazioni sui rapporti fra strutture formali e contenuti ideologici nella poesia provençale," *Cultura Neolatina* 28 (1968): 113–46. Riquer, *Los trovadores* (see note 19), 114. Joseph J. Duggan, "Guilhem IX's Poem About Nothing and the Generation of Meaning," in *Contez me tout: mélanges de langue et littérature médiévales offerts à Herman Braet*, ed. Catherine Bel, Pascale Dumont, Frank Willaert. La république des lettres, 28 (Louvain: Editions Peeters, 2006), 827–37.

medieval scholastic methods and concerns, particularly the debates between Nominalism and Realism, dialectical and negative argumentation by oppositions and contradictions, as well as the Augustinian epistemology of knowing and not knowing<sup>28</sup>; that it is informed, seriously or parodically, by the concerns and methods of negative theology and Platonism/Neoplatonism, denying substance to the sensory world and locating essence in a realm of intellectual forms, invoking metaphors of life as procession and return, *exitus/reditus, peregrinatio* (pilgrimage) and *itinerarium ad locum sanctum* (journey to a holy place)<sup>29</sup>; that it is a literary, intellectual, and aesthetic product of the culture of *fin'amor* informed by the theological models and ideas current in the author's time<sup>30</sup>; that it is influenced by biblical texts like the *Song of Songs* and medieval dream literature, including notions of mystical love and dream visions<sup>31</sup>; that it is a manifestation of an inner conflict caused by the experience of love and a treatment of love as a sort of enchantment causing the lover to fall into a state of unreality and confusion<sup>32</sup>; that it is a manifestation of psychological depression or *morbus melancholicus*<sup>33</sup>; that it is informed by Celtic mythology and beliefs in spiritual forces of nature<sup>34</sup>; that it is a self-conscious literary and linguistic construct calling attention to its own structurality<sup>35</sup>; that it reflects the psychic, social, economic and

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28 Erich Köhler, "No sai qui s'es – No sai que s'es," *Mélanges de linguistique romane et de philologie médiévale offerts à M. Maurice Delbouille*, ed. Madeleine Tussens. 2 vols. *Philologie Médiévale* (Gembloux, Belgium: Éditions J. Duculot, S. A., 1964), 349–66. Lawner, "Notes" (see note 25), 147–64; id., "Tot es niens" *Cultura Neolatina* 31 (1971), 155–70.

29 Lawner, "Notes" (see note 25), 149–50 and "Tot es niens" (see note 29). Andrea Pulega, *Amore cortese e modelli teologici: Guglielmo IX, Chrétien de Troyes, Dante*. Di fronte e attraverso, 379 (Milan: Editoriale Jaca Book SpA, 1995), 103–04, 129–31, 172–73.

30 Pulega, *Amore cortese* (see note 30), 105–14.

31 Alberto del Monte, *Civiltà e poesia romanze*. Biblioteca di filologia romanza, 2 (Bari: Adriatica Editrice, 1958), 60–69. Cf. Michel Stanesco, "L'expérience poétique du 'pur néant' chez Guillaume IX d'Aquitaine." *Médiévales* 6 (1984): 48–68; especially 55–59, comparing the experience described in William IX's "Farai un vers de dreit nien" to mystical states with analogues in Eastern spirituality.

32 Reto R. Bezzola, *Les origines et la formation de la littérature courtoise en Occident (500–1200)*: 2e partie: *La société féodale et la transformation de la littérature de cour*. Bibliothèque de l'École des Hautes Études, 313 (Paris: Champion, 1960). Alberto Limentani, *L'eccezione narrativa. La Provenza medievale e l'arte del racconto* (Turin: Einaudi, 1977). Pasero, *Guglielmo IX* (see note 19), 88. Bond, *Poetry of William* (see note 19), 63.

33 Beatrice Barbiellini Amidei, "Guglielmo IX, *Farai un vers de dreit nien* e l'immaginazione melanconica," *Studi Mediolatini e Volgari* 56 (2010): 27–54.

34 Francesco Benozzo, "Guglielmo IX e le fate. Il 'Vers de dreit nien' e gli archetipi celtici della poesia dei trovatori," *Medioevo Romanzo* 21 (1997): 69–87.

35 Joan Ferrante, "Farai un vers de dreit nien: The Craft of the Early Troubadours," *Vernacular Poetics in the Middle Ages*, ed. Lois Ebin. Studies in Medieval and Early Modern Culture. Studies

political situation of subjects of the feudal order<sup>36</sup>; that it is a *senhal*-like composition both alluding to and concealing the identity of a beloved lady and the place of her abode<sup>37</sup>; that it is a composition on the theme of the impossibility of the idealized object of desire of *fin'amor* and of the lady as a mirage produced by that desire<sup>38</sup>; and various combinations and variants of those notions.<sup>39</sup>

In terms of genre, the song is indeed crafted as a *devinalh* (riddle) that alludes to the identity of a secret beloved and the land where she dwells, or where she originated, but also suggests that the riddle has broader existential and affective significance, being a riddle about the experience of love and the unstable nature of the objects of desire. The ultimate riddle, however, is one of identity and subjectivity and is an expression of confusion and uncertainty regarding the question of personal identity, as that question was amenable to different answers at a time of shifting conceptions of the worth and role of the self within changing social, political and economic structures. In terms of the

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in *Medieval Culture* (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, 1984), 93–128. Burgwinkle, “Troubadour Song” (see note 24), speaks of the song as hinting to “an empty signifier,” “an empty code,” and “rhetorical structures which mean only in relation to prior models which are known to their listeners, not to their referents” (20).

**36** Luigi Milone, “Retorica del potere e retorica dell’oscuro da Guglielmo IX a Raimbaut d’Aurenga,” *Retorica e poetica: Atti del III Convegno di Studi Italo-Tedesco (Bressanone, 1975)*, ed. Daniela Goldin. Quaderni del Circolo Filologico-Linguistico Padovano, 10 (Padua: Liviana, 1979), 147–77; Jonathan Newman, “Poetic Self- Performance and Political Authority in the Companho Lyrics of Guilhem de Peitieu,” *Tenso* 27 (2012): 25–44; bibliography on the topic of feudalism and troubadour literature in Mario Mancini, *Metafora feudale. Per una storia dei trovatori* (Bologna, Il Mulino, 1993). Bond, *Poetry of William* (see note 19), xxv–xxvi. Also Herbert Moller, “The Social Causation of the Courtly Love Complex,” *Comparative Studies of Society and History* 1 (1958–1959): 137–63; Erich Köhler, “Observations historiques et sociologiques sur la poésie des troubadours,” *Cahiers de Civilisation Médiévale* 7 (1964): 27–51; and Georges Duby, *Hommes et structures du Moyen Âge: Recueil d’articles. Savoir historique*, 1 (Paris: Mouton, 1973); id., “Youth in Aristocratic Society,” *The Chivalrous Society*, trans. Cynthia Postan (Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press / Edward Arnold, 1977), 112–22.

**37** Pasero, *Guglielmo IX*, (see note 19), 111 n. 46. Richard, *Histoire* (see note 24), I.504.

**38** Köhler, “No sai qui s’es,” (see note 29), 360. Burgwinkle, “Troubadour Song” (see note 24), suggests “his object of desire is infinitely replaceable by others of its ilk” (20).

**39** Discussions of the relevant literature can be found in L. T. [Leslie Thomas] Topsfield, *Troubadours and Love* (London and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1975), 33–34; Riquer, *Los trovadores* (see note 19), I.113–15; Pasero, “‘Devinalh’” (see note 29): 113–46, here 122, notes 2 and 4; id., *Guglielmo IX* (see note 19), 85 n. 1; Silvia Buzzetti Gallarati, “La musa inquietante di Guglielmo IX: un’interpretazione del ‘vers de dreit nien,’” *Studi testuali* 2, ed. Luciana Borghi Cedrini, Walter Meliga, and Sergio Vatteroni. Collana di Studi Filologici: Scrittura e Scrittori, Serie Miscellanea, 3 (Alessandria, Italy: Edizioni dell’Orso, 1993), 29–51; Pulega, *Amore cortese* (see note 30), 61–114, esp. 63–64 notes 205 and 206.

deployment of negative imagination, the song exhibits what appears to be genuine existential pathos related to the experience of the individual vis-à-vis daunting cultural and political forces, the growing realities of impersonal powers and structures such as the steep pyramids of feudal relations, the abstractions of kingship and the law, nascent forms of administered states, and the also formidable challenges of the market economy and its mind-boggling assessments of value.<sup>40</sup>

Dwarfing the individual and rendering him/her seemingly insignificant, the cultural and other shifts that characterized the High Middle Ages, courtly ages, or “the long twelfth century,” help explain why even powerful figures like William had to contend with feelings of anomie, depression, and anxieties that strike us as rather postmodern and which are so indeed because the modern period truly began in this formative stage of our ongoing western history.

This essay further proposes that, after the immersion in the *nien* (nothing) that is the essence of the poetic exercise, an annihilation of a former self is expected to take place, to be followed by a sort of rebirth, a new form of subjective existence which is dependent on new codes, keys and counterkeys, which are not yet entirely in the possession of the individual undergoing subjection. The identity of self and other emerge, from these meditations, as solutions to a riddle whose secret solution is hidden in an *estui* (lockbox), the key to which is held by the beloved, and also somewhere else, in the form of a *contraclau* (counterkey) held by a third party. The imagery of *nien* (nothingness) and of the *clau* (Latin *clavis*; key) and *contraclau* (counterkey), on the other hand, this essay suggests, was most likely inspired by a popular paraphrase of John Scotus Eriugena's *Periphyseon: De divisione naturae*, which circulated in William's time under the title *Clavis physicae* (Key of Nature), the work of William's contemporary, Honorius of Autun (ca. 1080–1154).<sup>41</sup>

From the start, William's song explicitly, but clearly tongue-in-cheek, denies being about love, or anything else, jestingly adding that the song was composed while sleeping and riding on a horse, itself meant to indicate the deliberate absurdity of the piece and the nonchalance of the poet who pretends to be able to

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<sup>40</sup> On the growing use of abstract concepts, social, political and economic, as well as in theological and philosophical discussions, see Dinzelbacher, *Structures and Origins* (see note 2), 101–03.

<sup>41</sup> Honorius Augustodunensis, *Clavis physicae*, ed. Lucentini (see note 5); id. *La Clavis physicae* (316–529) di Honorivs Avgvstodvnensis: *Studio e Edizione*, ed. Pasquale Arfé (Naples: Liguori Editore, 2012). Arfé dates the work to around 1110–1115 (9 n. 2), consistent with the years of the literary activity of William (ca. 1102–1119) and particularly with Bond's dating of the song after 1106: Bond, *Poetry of William* (see note 19), 63.

compose such an intriguing and philosophically sophisticated piece in the most casual of circumstances.<sup>42</sup> Such claims are not to be taken too seriously, of course, as the poet is not refusing to participate in the social games of courtly love, quite the contrary, but is choosing to do so in an ingenious and clever manner that, while denying any interest in love and making fun of lovers, also expresses a deep passion for a mysterious lady who has managed to drive him to a distraction and madness not unlike the *folie* of Tristan.<sup>43</sup> The song indeed is far from being only a joke or a piece of nonsense.<sup>44</sup> It has a very serious side that thoughtfully reflects on the subject's state of affective distress and genuine confusion, feelings of alienation and disconnection from self and others, and disempowerment vis-à-vis external powers that determine the course of the speaker's life.<sup>45</sup> All of this is accomplished while jesting and ridiculing the poet's rivals and

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**42** Lawner noted that to write while sleeping or traveling would suggest "something foolish or trifling" (161) but the song is far from being nonsense: "Notes" (see note 25). Jeanroy classified the song as a variant of the genre referred to as *reversari* (verses featuring contradictory ideas) in Molinier's fourteenth-century *Leys d'amors* and believed it to be deliberately nonsensical and similar to the so-called "coq-à-l'âne," also called *fatras*, *fatrasie*, *fratrasie*, or *resverie*: "Les genres lyriques" (see note 26), 213–14, and 214 note 3. Francesca Gambino notes the introduction is a variant of false modesty or *captatio benevolentiae* with precedents in Latin literature and intended to emphasize the casual nature of a composition not meant to be taken too seriously: "Sur quelques expressions du 'vers de dreit nien' de Guilhem de Poitiers (183.7)," *Revue des langues romanes* 116.2 (2012): 439–59; here 441–42. The motif of composing songs while sleeping and riding on horseback is not unique and may be a reference to the forms of entertainment of riders on long journeys, the sleep-inducing boredom of such rides, and saddles designed to allow riders to sleep without danger of falling off the horse: Riquer, *Los trovadores* (see note 19), 1.113, citing Paul Martin, *Armes et armures de Charlemagne à Louis XIV* (Paris: Bibliothèque des Arts; Fribourg: Office du livre, 1967), 206. Riquer, *ibid.*, also notes the uncertainty of the situation, since the speaker (ll. 13–14) claims not to know when he is asleep or awake. Pasero indicates the motif of a meditation that takes place while traveling on horseback is common and treated parodically in this song: *Guglielmo IX* (see note 19), 96–97. Parallels occur in two poems of Cerveri/Serveri de Girona ("De Pala a Torosela" and "Si nuyll temps fuy pessius ne cossiros"; songs 434a.17 and 434a.60 in Pillet and Carstens, *Bibliographie* [see note 19], 390, 392) and Gui d'Ussel ("L'autre jorn per aventura"; song 194.14 in Pillet and Carstens, *Bibliographie*, 165), noted in Riquer, *ibid.*

**43** In addition to the madness of the lover, other elements of the song including the bewitching, the illness that can be cured by the beloved, and the journeying back and forth are very suggestive of the influence of some version of the Tristan and Isolde story that must have been known to William, already at this early time, long before Béroul, Thomas, or Marie de France.

**44** Lawner observed the "playful yet serious handling of the concept of nothingness" and also noted the influence on the song of the medieval traditions of the riddle and negative theology: "Notes" (see note 25), 148.

**45** "... there does seem to be a definite philosophical background to the poem ... [that] reflects the ideological and cultural context of its time. Contemporary dialectic based primarily on the problem of being and non-being, universals vs. concepts that are only 'names,' the problem of



competitors, secular and ecclesiastic, in the artistic, social and political games associated with the culture of *fin'amor*.

To those effects, William deploys cutting-edge philosophical and theological argumentation in a parody of ecclesiastical discourse invoking unorthodox ideas that were generating great interest but also raising eyebrows in William's time, namely, the negative theology of John Scotus Eriugena, whose *Periphyseon* would be officially banned by Pope Honorius III in 1225.<sup>46</sup> The essential procedure of Eriugena's argumentation is the proof of the super-existence of God via assertions and negations of the attributes of known objects of cognition, including the problematizing of propositions such as the idea that God is everything and knows everything, both of which are simultaneously denied and affirmed.

In the *Clavis physicae*, the groundwork is laid by asserting that all things in nature can be divided into things that are and things that are not: "Physica igitur, id est natura omnium rerum, dividitur in ea que sunt et in ea que non sunt" (Natural philosophy, therefore, that is, the nature of all things, is divided into things that are and things that are not).<sup>47</sup> This duality of being and non-being is essential to the characterization of the totality of *physica*, the material world and the ensemble of methods by which we come to know it. God is the first and

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the Creation *ex nihilo* ...": Lawner, "Tot es niens" (see note 29), 155. Lawner failed to appreciate, however, the elements of actual confusion and bafflement of the poet regarding the experiences of a lover confronted with the challenges of courtly love. Lawner stated that "there is never the possibility that the poet does not know what the poem or, for that matter, the world is about" (155). If that were the case, however, the poet would be the first human being not to feel at least somewhat distressed by the contradictions and affective complications of being in love, especially with the impossible objects of desire characteristic of *fin'amor*. A more accurate understanding of the complexity of the speaker's psychic and affective state, and of the relations of the song to medieval philosophy and theology, was offered by Köhler, "No sai qui s'es" (see note 29), 349–66. Köhler noted the influence of the Augustinian dialectic of knowledge and ignorance regarding questions of being and of the possibility of certainty about given aspects of existence (353–54) and further observed that the song's theme is "die Ungewissheit über den Inhalt und den Realitätscharakter der eigenen Gefühlswelt. Die Fragestellungen der fröhscholastischen Dialektik dienen als Medien für das Betroffensein durch das neue Erlebnis der höfischen Liebe, speziell für deren spiritualistische Komponente" (354; the uncertainty over the content and reality of one's own affective experience. The issues that concerned early scholastic dialectic mediate, and serve as vehicles for the expression of, the effects of the new experience of courtly love, especially because of their spiritual component).

<sup>46</sup> Honorius, *Clavis physicae* (316–529), ed. Arfé (see note 42), 9. The ideas of Eriugena reached contemporaries of William like Arno and Gerhoh von Reichersberg and also later figures like Nicholas of Cusa, via Honorius's paraphrase (v).

<sup>47</sup> "De duali divisione nature," in Honorius, *Clavis physicae*, ed. Lucentini (see note 5), 4.

final cause of that *physica*, including the *essentia* of all beings and also their non-*essentia*. What exists and what does not exist are intelligible effects, phenomena that cancel each other out by their opposite essences, thus pointing toward a higher causal reality, the super-existence of God. A reasoning procedure that works by confrontation of what is with what is not, negative theology shares with riddles a method of concealment of the answer which is the intended goal of the exercise. Thus, in the *Clavis*, Honorius re-asserts Eriugena's fundamental propositions, that God is nothing and that God does not know himself ("Quod nichil sit Deus," *Clavis physicae*, §163; "Quod Deus nesciat quid sit" §108).<sup>48</sup>

Though William claims to be making a song about nothing and denies it being about love, we have to understand love is indeed a central concern of the poet but, more importantly, love and not-love are points of reference hinting at a hidden ground on which both of them are determined, a cause by which they are given meaning and both existence and non-existence, but which itself is highly elusive and difficult to grasp:

Farai un vers de dreit nien;  
non er de mi ni d'autra gen,  
non er d'amor ni de joven  
ni de ren au,  
qu'enans fo trobatz en durmen  
sus un chivau (ll. 1–6).

[I will make a song exactly about nothing;  
it will not be about me or about other people,  
it will not be about love or about youth,  
or about anything else,  
and, after all, it was composed while sleeping  
on a horse.]

As we know from other songs of William, the image of riding, and in this case also sleeping, on a horse has sexual and obscene connotations.<sup>49</sup> Since antiquity, however, the image of a horse and its rider, or a chariot and its charioteer, has also been associated with concepts such as the journey of the soul and the relationship between passion and reason. Ideally, the alert and vigilant rider/charioteer, representing reason, directs the journey toward the best possible outcomes. A sleeping rider, however, would be symbolically synonymous with an aimless

<sup>48</sup> Honorius, *Clavis physicae*, ed. Lucentini (see note 5), 128–29, 79–80.

<sup>49</sup> Classen, "Die Erfahrung mit dem Nichts" (see note 12), 150. Silvio Pellegrini, "Intorno al vassallaggio d'amore nei primi trovatori," *Cultura Neolatina* 4–5 (1944–1945): 21–36; here 30.

life led astray by unrestrained passions, or other forces, without the guidance of reason.<sup>50</sup> Allowing one's horse to wander at its will (or boarding a ruderless boat and letting it drift) are, on the other hand, well-known motifs in chivalric literature, where the questing hero assumes a divine power will guide his steps toward an appropriate adventure – a situation parodied by Cervantes in his hapless Don Quijote, in Chapter 4 of Part I of the novel, as the hero allows his horse, Rocinante, to make the choice of road to follow, with disastrous consequences.<sup>51</sup> What the imagery in this case suggests is a situation where the subject has no control over his own life and, as a passive subject, is being led in certain directions, not necessarily in his best interest, by forces that are both external and internal to him, as the horse is literally an external creature, a vehicle, but also a symbol of libidinal and other energies in the rider himself. Also since antiquity, sleep has been related to death. In classical mythology, *Hypnos/Somnus* (Sleep) is the brother of *Thanatos* (Death), both children of *Nyx* (Night).<sup>52</sup> Sleep in this case is related to the speaker's state of unknowing, the twilight existence of the subject who experiences the death-like trance of being in love.

Along those lines, the speaker claims not to know when he was born and, describing a state of ignorance and powerlessness, emotional emptiness and lack of connection to others, suggests he was bewitched by some mysterious, nocturnal force that acted on him while he was situated on a “pueg au” (l. 12; high hill), an elevated or otherwise high-standing place:

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50 A concept originating in Plato's metaphor of the soul in *Phaedrus* 246–56, the horse, from pagan antiquity to the modern period, has been associated with “sensuous passion or libido.” An illustration from Achille Bocchi's *Symbolicae quaestiones* (1574) represents the “taming of the passions” as a man holding the rein of a rearing horse: Edgar Wind, *Pagan Mysteries in the Renaissance* (New York: Barnes & Noble, 1968), 145 and plate 41. As del Monte notes, the horse has a similar meaning in biblical literature: “il cavallo simboleggia, nell'esegesi biblica, la felicità terrena” (*Civiltà* [see note 32], 62; the horse symbolizes, in biblical exegesis, earthly happiness).

51 A different view of the sleep imagery in relation to medieval interpretations of *Song of Solomon* 5:2 (“Ego dormio, et cor meum vigilat”: *The Vulgate Bible. Volume III. The Poetical Books*. Douay-Rheims Translation, ed. Swift Edgar and Angela M. Kinney. Dumbarton Oaks Medieval Library [Cambridge, MA, and London, UK: Harvard University Press, 2011], 744) and mystical visions was proposed by del Monte, *Civiltà* (see note 32), 60–69. Del Monte saw in the song a vision of “una realtà tutta interiore rivelatagli nel *somnium*. È quindi un sonno fisico, ma una vigilia spirituale, una veglia in cui si ha la rivelazione della propria verità spirituale e che il poeta ha raffigurato con il paradosso del *dormir sobre cheveau*, del riposare-andando” (60–61).

52 “Υπνω ... κασιγνήτω Θανάτοιο” (Sleep the brother of Death): Homer, *Iliad* 14.231; Greek text in Homer, *Homeri Opera* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1920), retrieved from Perseus Digital Library, <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/> (last accessed on Oct. 6, 2019). Also Hesiod, *Theogony* 212.

No sai en qual hora-m fui natz,  
 no soi alegres ni iratz,  
 no soi estranhs ni soi privat,  
 ni no-n puec au,  
 qu'enaissi fui de nueitz fadatz  
 sobr'un pueg au (ll. 7–12).

[I don't know at what time I was born;  
 I am not happy or angry,  
 nor am I a stranger or a close friend,  
 and I can't help any of it,  
 because I was bewitched  
 on a high hill.]

Though the song pretends not to be about love, it is also designed to convey to a secret beloved the intensity of the lover's passion, by pointing out the state of emptiness and vacancy that comes upon him because of her and particularly in her absence. In that sense, the song allows the beloved to understand that she is everything to the lover and that without her he is nothing and has nothing. The idea of being "fadatz" (enchanted) is compatible with these notions as indeed the state of being in love is comparable to that of being under the influence of a powerful and higher force, hence the "pueg au," the high mountain on which the enchantment is supposed to have occurred.<sup>53</sup> The beloved in that sense is characterized as a divinity, a magical being capable of granting happiness, health and identity to the lover, and all the opposite in her absence or if she is cold and indifferent toward him.

The third stanza reinforces the feelings of disconnection from oneself, as the speaker claims not to know when he sleeps or wakes and requires others to tell him whether he is actually asleep or awake, which again stresses the idea of an external determination of consciousness and subjectivity. Who he is and what his state of consciousness or unconsciousness might be is something that comes to him from the outside and from what others tell him, not by what he knows or is able to determine himself. All he knows is that he is suffering from an acute, nearly deadly, "dol corau" (l. 16; pain of the heart), apparently a grave condition about which, however, he says he does not care:

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<sup>53</sup> "The effect of *amor* (love/desire) was compared to a magical enchantment by many troubadours, as well as northern romancers such as Chrétien de Troyes and Marie de France. It is considered to be of Breton (i.e., Welsh) origin, and one should remember the report about the Breton story-teller Bleheris and a Count of Poitiers": Bond, *Poetry of William* (see note 19), 63 n. 11. Benozzo, "Guglielmo IX e le fate" (see note 35), 69–87.

No sai cora-m fui endormitz,  
 ni cora-m veill, s'om no m'o ditz;  
 per pauc no m'es lo cor partitz  
 d'un dol corau;  
 e no m'o pretz una fromitz,<sup>54</sup>  
 per Saint Marsau! (ll. 13–18)

[I don't know at what time I fell asleep,  
 or when I am awake, unless someone tells me;  
 my heart is nearly broken  
 from a keen pain;  
 but I don't care at all [I don't care an ant/mouse],  
 by Saint Martial!]

Lines 19–24 elaborate on the motif of love as a disease and of the beloved, or someone else, as capable of healing it:

Malautz soi e cre mi morir,  
 e re no sai mas quan n'aug dir;  
 metge querrai al mieu albir,  
 e no-m sai tau;  
 bos metges er, si-m pot guerir,  
 mas non si amau. (ll. 19–24)

[I am sick and believe I could die,  
 and I don't know a thing except what I hear;  
 I will seek a doctor that suits me,  
 but I don't know which one;  
 it will be a good doctor, if she can heal me,  
 but not if I get worse.]

In the following stanza, the speaker further specifies that he has an “amigua” (l. 25; lady friend), but says he does not know who she is because he has never seen her – seemingly a parody of the motif of the *amor de lonh* (love from a distance), seen in troubadours like Jaufre Rudel, who, according to his *vida*, became enamoured of a lady, the Countess of Tripoli, merely on hearing of her beauty and virtues.<sup>55</sup> He adds that his *amigua* has never done anything to either please or upset him, and that he doesn't care anyway, for, as he states cryptically, he has never

<sup>54</sup> “fromitz” (l. 17; ant) in Ms. E is “soritz” (mouse) in Ms. C (see note 22).

<sup>55</sup> Assessing the evidence, so far inconclusive, of the possibility that William was engaged in direct parody of Jaufre Rudel, see Manetti and Vatteroni, “Osservazioni” (see note 27), 17–58. Gambino notes the *vida* alters the motif as it appears in Jaufre Rudel's poetry but points out the idea of loving “ses vezzer” (without seeing) may be a parody of the epiphany the lover experiences when first seeing the beloved: “Sur quelques expressions” (see note 43), 452–53. She also notes that the explanation of William's images in terms of the work of a later troubadour,

hosted Normans or French(wo)men in his “ostau” (l. 30; home, hostel, facility meant to accommodate a guest):

Amigu'ai ieu, non sai qui s'es<sup>56</sup>:  
 C'anc no la vi, si m'aiut fes;  
 ni-m fes que-m plassa ni que-m pes,  
 ni no m'en cau:  
 c'anc non ac Norman ni Franses  
 dins mon ostau. (ll. 25–30)

[I have a lady friend. I don't know who she is;  
 because I've never seen her, by my faith [if faith helps me];  
 nor has she [ever] done anything to me that pleased or upset me,  
 and I don't care:  
 for I never had Normans or French  
 as guests in my house.]

As Alfred Richard noted, these lines hint in cryptic but nonetheless significant ways toward the issue of William's adulterous relationship with the Angevin noblewoman, Amauberge de l'Isle Bouchard (1079–1151), nicknamed *Dangerosa Maubergeonne*, the wife of William's viscount, Aimeric I of Châtellerauld, and the lover whom William hosted in the Maubergeon tower in Poitiers.<sup>57</sup> As Richard also specifies, the tower was one of two that William built in response to the threat of growing Angevin power: “la tour élevée dans les dépendances du palais doit être la tour Maubergeon, qui occupa l'emplacement réservé aux plaids de justice, le ‘mallobergium’; quant à l'autre, qui se trouvait à l'entrée de la ville, elle devait commander la route de l'Anjou” (the tower erected by the palace must

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like Jaufre Rudel, is a valid and effective procedure that yields insight into the reception of his poetry (445).

<sup>56</sup> Cf. Angelus Silesius, “Ich lieb ein einzig Ding und weiss nicht, was es ist; / Und weil ich es nicht weiss, drum hab ich es erkiest” (“Man liebt auch ohne Erkennen,” l.43; I love one thing alone but I do not know what it is; / And while I don't know what it is, for that reason I have chosen it): *Sämtliche Poetische Werke: Band 3, Cherubinischer Wandersmann. Sinnliche Beschreibung der Vier Letzten Dinge*, ed. Hans Ludwig Held (Munich: Carl Hanser Verlag, 1949–52); cf. Albrecht Classen, “Boethius and No End in Sight: The Impact of *De consolatioe philosophiae* on Early Modern German Literature From the Fifteenth Through the Seventeenth Century: Andreas Gryphius and Johann Scheffler (Angelus Silesius),” *Daphnis* 46 (2018): 448–66 (online at: <https://doi.org/10.1163/18796583-04601010>); id., “Johann Scheffler (Angelus Silesius): The Silesian Mystic as a Boethian Thinker. Universal Insights, Ancient Wisdom, and Baroque Perspectives,” *Humanities Open Access* 7.127 (2018): 1–12, Dec. 4, 2018 (online at: <https://doi.org/10.3390/h7040127>).

<sup>57</sup> Richard, *Histoire* (see note 24), l.446 n. 3, 504. D. D. R. [Douglas David Roy] Owen, *Eleanor of Aquitaine: Queen and Legend* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1993), 8, 10, 112.

have been the Maubergeon tower, placed in the area reserved for the pleading of court cases, the “mallobergium”; as for the other tower, which was placed at the entrance to the city, it must have commanded the road to Anjou).

In addition to its denoting the place of administration of justice, the word, *Maubergeon*, however, is also connected to its functions as a place for hosting visitors. The Occitan nouns *auberc/alberc* signify a house or dwelling, and the verb *albergar* is “to host” and “to provide shelter.” In that sense, the Maubergeon tower was also what William would have considered his guest house, *m’auberc*, corresponding to the “mon ostau” of line 30. *Maubergeonne*, as Amauberge’s nickname, suggests then the idea of “my [woman] guest,” which corresponds to the implicit allusions in the song to people William has, as opposed to has not, hosted in his *ostau*. The tower would also help understand the notion of having been bewitched in a “pueg au” (high hill or high place). As Alfred Richard noted, the Occitan terms *pueg* and *poy* are derived from Latin *podium*, meaning an elevated place.<sup>58</sup>

The reference to the Normans and the French, indicating they have not been hosted in William’s home, functions by elimination of what is mentioned and pointing to what is not mentioned, a characteristic procedure of riddles and of the Eriugenian *via negativa*. Anjou would then be the missing complement of references to France and Normandy as William’s notorious northern neighbors and his main rivals in the power struggles of the time. Also following the logic of explicitly stating what is not and omitting the significant element, the expression “per Saint Marsau!” (l. 18; by Saint Martial) points toward Limoges, a location about 130 kilometers southeast of Poitiers.<sup>59</sup> A journey of about the same length in the opposite direction, northwest from Poitiers, would lead to Angers in Anjou. Yet another pointer to Anjou are the variants of line 46 featuring “Anjau” in Ms. C, but “Peitau” in Ms. E., as the destination of the song and the dwelling place of the mystery beloved.

The sixth stanza of the song further discusses the *amigua* by repeating the idea of loving her in spite of not having ever seen her and not having received from her either favors or injuries. The lover, however, makes rather surprising and challenging statements regarding this *amigua* by suggesting that he does just fine when he doesn’t see her, and, most shockingly, in the context of the

<sup>58</sup> Richard, *Histoire* (see note 24), I.446 n. 3, 504 n.3.

<sup>59</sup> Richard also remarks on the peculiarities of the language, involving dialectal forms from the Limousin, like “pueg” (l. 12; hill), as opposed to the Poitevin *poy* (*Histoire* [see note 24], I.504 n. 3). In contrast, forms like “chivau” (l. 6; horse) appear to be Poitevin: Pasero, *Guglielmo IX* (see note 19), 97 n. 5.

expected loyalty of courtly lovers, claiming to know another lady who is gentler, more beautiful and more worthy than her:

Anc non la vi ez am la fort;  
anc non aic dreit ni no-m fes tort;  
quan no la vei, be m'en deport,  
no-m prez un jau:  
qu'ie-n sai gensor e belazor,  
e que mais vau. (ll. 31–36)

[I have never seen her and yet I love her very much;  
I never had rights over her nor did she do me wrong;  
when I don't see her, I am just fine,  
and don't care much:  
for I know one who is gentler and more beautiful,  
and who is worth more.]

The introduction of this third person into the characterization of the love situation is highly interesting for its insight into the triangular mechanics of courtly desire, not to speak of semiotic signification altogether, and also as a practical device possibly intended to needle an indifferent beloved with a bit of jealousy for a supposed rival. Even more obviously perhaps, the triangular situation is most likely an allusion to the adulterous relationship involving the lover, his wife, and his mistress. The *amigua* toward whom the lover is rather indifferent would seem to correspond to the wife, historically the figure of Philippa-Mathilda of Toulouse, whereas the mysterious “gensor e belazor” would be the seductive *Dangerosa* with whom William was known to have been besotted.<sup>60</sup>

The affair between William and *Dangerosa* appears to have begun around 1114. At that time, William and Philippa were residing in Toulouse, which William had invaded in 1113, taking advantage of the power vacuum created there by the deaths in the Holy Land of the counts of Toulouse, Raymond de Saint-Gilles (d. 1105) and his eldest son, Bertrand (d. 1112), and the fact that Philippa was a legitimate heir to the county, as daughter of Guillaume IV (d. 1094), count of Toulouse and brother of Raymond de Saint-Gilles. Displacing a ten-year old son of Raymond, Alfonse-Jourdain, William occupied Toulouse and Philippa gave birth there to a son, named Raymond, in 1114. At that time, as

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<sup>60</sup> The term *amigua* suggests a closer and more familiar relationship than that of a lover toward a distant, idealized *domna*. Cf. Pasero Guglielmo IX (see note 19), 104 n. 25. The manuscript variants of line 17, “fromitz” (Ms. E; ant) and “sorbitz” (Ms. C; mouse) could turn out to be significant as “sorbitz” would echo the word “sor” (sister), again suggesting a familial, asexual relationship and perhaps also hinting at Philippa-Mathilda’s joining of the Fontevrault community.



Alfred Richard explains, William was using the excuse of political business to journey frequently to Poitiers, where he was meeting Dangerosa, conveniently installed in the Maubergeon tower. By 1115–1116, Philippa had become aware of the affair and left her husband, joining the religious community led by Robert d'Arbrissel at Fontevrault, an institution situated in Anjou and that enjoyed the patronage of the Angevin counts.<sup>61</sup>

In many ways, William's strange song about *nien* (nothing) corresponds to his state of mind, around the years 1114–1116, as he traveled on horseback, back and forth between Toulouse and Poitiers, also carrying on business with Anjou, and weighing his feelings for his wife and his mistress, eventually losing his wife to Fontevrault, and getting to experience, even more acutely, the unreality of a life of both geographical and emotional dislocation, absence, abandonment, and loneliness.<sup>62</sup> The notions then of the uncertainty of the identity and the dwelling place of the beloved, as well as the references to going back and forth ("rema ... vau"; ll, 41–42), are explainable in terms of the physical displacements and emotional complications of love affairs that can leave a person reeling with sadness and confusion, wondering indeed where the loved one is, and who that loved one might be in the first place.

These were particularly trying times for William as he also was experiencing financial difficulties, occasioned by the cost of his adventures in Toulouse, and the corresponding political troubles with the Church, as apparently he tried to cover his expenses by dispossessing ecclesiastical establishments, which in turn led to his being excommunicated by Peter II, the bishop of Poitiers. Matters were not helped by William's rage at Peter, his threatening to kill him, and his arrest and incarceration, which led to Peter dying in William's prison in 1115.<sup>63</sup> His affair with Dangerosa also resulted in further trouble with the Church, as William was confronted and admonished by the papal legate, Girard, whom William proceeded to dismiss and ridicule, resulting in confirmation of the excommunication imposed by Peter. In the midst of so much trouble, we can perhaps understand why William was feeling a bit like his life was meaningless and empty.

The seventh stanza appears to validate the reading of the *amigua* as William's wife and the "gensor e belazor" as the beloved Dangerosa, the substantial cause of his confusion and distress. The argument here returns to the image of the "pueg" (l. 38; hill/high place) seen before in the second stanza (l.

<sup>61</sup> Richard, *Histoire* (see note 24), I.466–67, 470, 472–73.

<sup>62</sup> Richard, *Histoire* (see note 24), I. 472–73.

<sup>63</sup> Richard, *Histoire* (see note 24), I.467–69.

12) but introducing further indirection by the lack of certainty of the location of the beloved, “en pueg ho ... en pla” (l. 38; on a hill or a plain), and suggesting the situation causes him an unspeakable “tort” (l. 39; harm), apparently connected to her absence, unlike the *amigua* whose actions leave him, he says, feeling indifferent (ll. 27, 32). Also notable here is the mention of the need to stay silent and to set out in search of the beloved and the remedy to his illness.

No sai lo luec ves on s'esta,  
 si es en pueg ho es en pla;  
 non aus dire lo tort que m'a,  
 abans m'en cau;  
 e peza-m be quar sai rema,  
 ab aitan vau. (ll. 37–42)

[I don't know the place where she is,  
 if it is on a hill or a plain;  
 I don't dare reveal the harm that has befallen me,  
 I'd rather stay silent;  
 and it grieves me that she stays there,  
 and so I go.]

The riddle-like treatment of the relationship between William, Philippa, and Dangerosa in the song is especially relevant for both its historical and its structural aspects, which manage to shed significant light on the problem of desire and its imitative nature, as well as its connections to political power. As Richard noted, the affair between William and Dangerosa was itself a kind of imitation of the infamous relationship between Philip I of France and Betrada de Montfort (d. 1117), the wife of Fulk IV, count of Anjou, which led to the excommunication of the French king by Pope Urban II in 1095.<sup>64</sup> At the Council of Poitiers in 1100, that excommunication was renewed but vigorously contested by William, raising questions as to his underlying motivations, which might have gone beyond loyalty and devotion to his liege lord.<sup>65</sup> Interestingly, Betrada and Fulk IV were the parents of Fulk V, “le Jeune,” count of Anjou, most bitter rival of William, and also the father of Geoffrey Plantagenet and hence grandfather of Henry II of England, who married Eleanor of Aquitaine, William's granddaughter. Eleanor herself was the daughter of William's son, William X, and Aénor de Châtellerauld, this latter the daughter of Dangerosa and her husband Aimeric.

Anjou was, indeed, in the early twelfth century the center of a growing power that was destined to become an Angevin empire—centered in Angers and

<sup>64</sup> Richard, *Histoire* (see note 24), I, 472–73.

<sup>65</sup> Bond, *Poetry of William* (see note 19), xxx–xxxi.

including Aquitaine, Anjou, Normandy, and even England – under kings like Henry II and his son with Eleanor, Richard the Lionheart. Intensely feeling the politico-erotic passions emanating from Anjou, figures like Philip I and William IX experienced firsthand the phenomenon of an *amor* that challenged all sense of identity, personal dignity, and self-worth, vacating, as it were, any previous understanding of subjectivity and of one's own power and position in the world. Perhaps not unlike the vortex of a hurricane, Anjou was the source of a power pulling everything around it into its depths and imposing on others its own definitions of identity and value, as determined by its own structures of authority and the Angevin effectiveness in the conducting of a politically-beneficial circulation of women. In that rising storm of power and desire, it is not surprising that William was swept up and made to feel insignificant and aimless, lost and bewitched by forces beyond his understanding and thoroughly outside his control.

In the context of a song that is a riddle of desire and of the rise of daunting political forces, the emergence of the destabilizing third person, the lady who is “gensor e belazor,” constitutes an analogue and answer to the missing third term in the “Norman ... Frances” expression of line 29 and a counterpart of other absent third elements, particularly in the last stanza, such as the “contraclau” (l. 48; counterkey), supplementing an implicit original *clau*, necessary to open the lady's “estui” (l. 47; lockbox); as well as the references to the conveying of the song to “celui” (l. 44; someone) who will in turn transmit it, via “autrui” (l. 45; someone else), toward the final recipient in either Anjou or Poitou. The trinitarian structure of these images is entirely in keeping with the structure of riddles as plays of opposites hinting at hidden answers, of dialectical reasoning, and dialogic argumentation, and also with the theological traditions of understanding reality in terms of underlying trinities, also with Eriugena's concern with the positing of a super-essential ground as the causation of the essential, where the former is not the opposite of the essential but its condition of being, also the condition of non-being of what is not. In that sense, the higher-order beloved upturns the existence of the speaker, rendering him into nothing and forcing him to acknowledge a new power, a new God so to speak, manifested in the theophany of the adored lady—she without whom there is no existence or meaning. For William, and hateful as that would have been to him given a long history of enmities with his northern neighbors, that power was Anjou.

The final stanza is rich in signals of the riddle-like nature of the song and provides important and rather explicit clues to its decipherment. Interestingly, the two manuscripts that preserve the song offer variants that appear to be directly relevant to the understanding of the song's puzzles:

Fait ai lo vers, no sai de cui;  
 et trametrai lo a celui  
 que lo-m trametra per autrui  
 enves Anjau/Peitau,  
 que-m tramezes del sieu estug/escut  
 La contraclau/la soa clau (ll. 43–48)

[I have made the song, don't know about whom;  
 and I will transmit it to someone  
 who will transmit it through someone else  
 toward Poitou/Anjou,  
 so [she] can transmit to me, of [her] lockbox/shield,  
 the counterkey/[her] key.]

Most notable in these lines is not just the long and circuitous route that the poet's message has to follow, involving multiple persons/places, but also the idea that for the speaker to have what he desires, he needs means of access that are not in his possession, represented by the image of the necessary *contra-clau*. Uc Faïdit's *Donatz proensals* defines *contraclau* as a "clavis facta contra clavem," that is, a copy of a *clavis/clau* (key) that can open the given container just as well as the original key.<sup>66</sup> Most immediately, these images seem to be hinting at solutions to the riddle of the identity and whereabouts of the beloved. The fact that "Anjau" (Anjou) would sometimes, likely depending on circumstances of place of performance and those present in the audience, be replaced by "Peitau" (Poitou), allowed listeners to enjoy the poem as a true *devinalh* with that particular hidden answer, *Anjau*, referring to the place of origin of his beloved. "Peitau," on the other hand, as an explicit destination of the song, would beg the question of why he would be sending messages or songs there, unless of course the recipient happened to be living in his home, which was the case with Dangerosa, while he was absent from that home, which was also true during William's sojourns in Toulouse. We can in fact easily imagine William riding on horseback from Toulouse to Poitiers, eager to see his mistress, and perhaps thinking about a copy of the key to the Maubergeon tower itself, or her apartments in it, if such facilities were locked, the original key being perhaps in her possession.

<sup>66</sup> Riquer, *Los trovadores* (see note 19), 1.114. The word *contraclaus* is defined in a glossary of rhyming words, in the *-aus* section in this case: *Die beiden ältesten provenzalischen Grammatiken*: Lo Donatz proensals und Las Rasos de Trobar, ed. Edmund Stengel (Marburg an der Lahn: N. G. Elwert, 1878), 44.7.

When the term “Anjou” was explicit, on the other hand, the song laid bare the device by hiding the answer in full sight, while concealing the dwelling place of the beloved which would have been Poitou, as Dangerosa was indeed being housed by William in Poitiers. Either way, the poet did not seem to be hiding his love affair, but was rather boasting about it and making no mystery of his distress over the experience of love and perhaps also over the disintegration of his marriage to Philippa, not to speak of his multiple problems with ecclesiastics like Peter and Girard. His boast of the possession of a woman from Anjou, furthermore, would have been an insult to the Angevins and a denial and invalidation of any claim they could have invoked over Châtellerault, an important defensive fortification on the northern reaches of Poitou, through the marriage of Dangerosa and Aimeric.<sup>67</sup>

Though most scholars dismiss as anachronistic the possibility of their referring to a chastity belt, the images of the *estui* and the *contraclau*, are nevertheless clearly sexual and have analogues in the works of other troubadours, including Marcabru and Bernart Marti.<sup>68</sup> Classen's analysis confirms the fact that the riddle is meant to point in the direction of very earthly passions and desires: “[wobei] wir zuletzt doch nur den Eindruck gewinnen, er verfolge allein sexuelle Gelüste” (we finally get the impression he is pursuing a purely sexual lust).<sup>69</sup>

The use by William and other troubadours of rather uncourtly images and allusions that are not just sexually suggestive but often quite explicit and even

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<sup>67</sup> On William's use of banter boasting of the sexual use of his vassals' wives as an assertion of political and territorial dominance see Bond, *Poetry of William* (see note 19), xxvi, lix; Richard Goddard, “The Ladies Agnes and Arsen in William IX's *Companho, farai un vers (qu'er) covinen*,” *Forum for Modern Language Studies* 2 (1988): 156–62; Marc Wolterbeek, “‘De Gimel ... per Niol’: Geographic Space and Placenames in Song One of William of Aquitaine,” *Tenso* 14 (1999): 39–52.

<sup>68</sup> Pellegrini, “Intorno al vassallaggio d'amore” (see note 50), 30. Thus Marcabru: “Tans n'i vei d'els contraclaviers, / greu sai remanra conz entiers / a crebar ni a mieich partir!” [I see so many passkeys hardly any ‘woman’ can remain whole, either to open up or to split in half], ll. 34–36 in Song XLI, “Pus s'enfulleysson li verjan,” Pillet and Carstens *Bibliographie* (see note 19), 293.41; Simon Gaunt, Ruth Harvey and Linda Paterson, *Marcabru: A Critical Edition* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2000), 513–20; here 514. And Bernart Marti (uncertain attribution): “Mas selh per cui hom las destrenh / Port' al braguier la contraclau” (l. 11–12; but he who harasses them has the counterkey hidden in his pants): “Belha m'es la flors d'aguilen,” Pillet and Carstens, *Bibliographie* (see note 19), 323.5; Valeria Tortoreto, “Per l'attribuzione di *Bel m'es qan la rana chanta* (BdT 293,11) e di *Belha m'es la flors d'aguilen* (BdT 323,5),” *Cultura neolatina* 67.2 (2007): 251–317.

<sup>69</sup> Classen, “Die Erfahrung mit dem Nichts” (see note 12), 152. Albrecht Classen, *The Medieval Chastity Belt: A Myth-Making Process*. The New Middle Ages (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007).

obscene has elicited much debate and discomfort among modern scholars, who often tend to try to deny or explain them away as errors of interpretation and aspects of the irreducible otherness of the past. Rather than misunderstandings of modern readers or peculiarities of bygone eras, however, these images hint strongly at the grounding of the song in human realities, particularly the entanglement of sexuality with matters of political domination, and also at the seemingly paradoxical negativity toward the beloved which is an unavoidable component of a passion symptomatic of subordination and subjection by powers fronted/represented by the desired lady. As such, love is inevitably a resentful, jealous, and possessive emotion originating in feelings of lack and inferiority, an affective syndrome elicited and mediated by, and serving the interests of, a higher power. Objectified in this song as a locked box containing something which the lover wants to possess but to which he does not hold the necessary keys, the lady stands as the object of desire but also an obstacle to yet a deeper-lying object of desire that lurks within/behind her and that has much to do with the power of other men, who vie for, possess, and proffer/pander her to others as a sign of their dominance.<sup>70</sup>

The referring of the request for the *contraclau* to Anjou proves, however, to be most revealing, as that would suggest that the lover having access to the beloved's *estui* would depend on the intervention of someone in Anjou. As Dangerousa would actually be housed in William's tower in Poitiers, a device coming from Anjou and allowing access to her has the effect of suggesting that the power capable of delivering her into his hands is not his but rather belongs to someone or something in Anjou. This has the virtue of illuminating the power behind the lady that is the mediator and enabler of the poet's desire and the possibility of the fulfillment of that desire. William's meditation on his own confusion regarding the experience of love proves fruitful then in the sense of identifying hidden and remote powers acting upon the lover and causing his misery and feelings of insignificance, powerlessness, and lack of identity, his essential nothingness. The "metge" (l. 21; physician, doctor) capable of bringing relief to the suffering of the lover is then not necessarily the lady herself but

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**70** Meg Bogin, *The Women Troubadours* (1976; New York: Norton, 1980); Christiane Marchello-Nizia, "Amour courtois, société masculine et figures de pouvoir," *Annales: Économies, Sociétés, Civilisations* 36 (1981): 969–82; E. Jane Burns, "The Man Behind the Lady in Troubadour Lyric," *Romance Notes* 25 (1985): 254–70; Toril Moi, "Desire in Language: Andreas Capellanus and the Controversy of Courtly Love," *Medieval Literature: Criticism, Ideology, and History*, ed. David Aers, (Brighton: Harvester Press, 1986), 11–33; Rouben Cholakian, "Marcabru and the Art of Courtly Misogyny," *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen* 90 (1989): 195–206.

can also be a power that allots identities, as well as property and rights, such as access to women, and that the poet suspects is to be found in Anjou.

Yet another intriguing set of variants regarding the images of the last stanza revolves around the in-itself mysterious *estui*. In a song where the beloved herself is of uncertain identity, as the truly beloved is someone/something else, the riddle of identity takes on a high level of complexity as a situation of deferred meanings and values where the ultimate answer seems ever-receding and elusive, much as in the ladders of Neoplatonic, Augustinian and Dantean theo-ontology. The variant readings, *estui/estug* (strongbox, lock-box) and *escut* (shield), in the two manuscripts preserving the poem, can be seen as no accident of scribal recording, but a significant manifestation, likely related to different circumstances of performance, of the counterkey(s) needed to open up the meanings hidden in the *estui*, or the *escut*.<sup>71</sup>

As a container intended to preserve, and also conceal, its contents, the *estui* shares with the *escut* the function of protection and the creation of a barrier between an object placed inside the *estui* or behind the *escut*. Shields on the other hand, in addition to their obvious defensive purposes in battle, were also used to identify combatants. There is strong evidence, as for example in the Bayeux tapestry, that painted shields played large roles in helping identify friends and enemies during encounters such as the Battle of Hastings, in 1066, between the Anglo-Saxons and the invading Norman forces of William the Conqueror in England. Crusaders were also known to have used such devices.<sup>72</sup> Painted shields eventually became, in the course of the twelfth century, the bearers of heraldic symbols and identifiers of individuals, their families, and their hereditary property and titles of nobility. The shield in that sense is an inscribed surface, not unlike a written document, a painted canvas, or other similar device bearing pictorial/symbolic images conveying information to others connected to multiple aspects of the life of the individual who bears the weapon. It also helps to protect that identity from others not aware of the coded meaning of its images. The identity-related messaging of battle shields

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<sup>71</sup> On the manuscript variants as aspects of performance in different places, see Pasero, *Guglielmo IX* (see note 19), 111 n. 46.

<sup>72</sup> Guibert de Nogent, *Gesta Dei per Francos* (ca. 1107), reports on the use of an eagle emblem, in imitation of Greek practices, on the shield of Baldwin (VII.38): Guibertus abbas Sanctae Mariae Novigenti, *Dei gesta per Francos*, ed. CTLO (Centre Tradition Litterarum Occidentalium). Corpus christianorum. Instrumenta Lexicologica Latina. Series A, Formae, 97 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2002); id., *The Deeds of God through the Franks: A Translation of Guibert de Nogent's Gesta Dei per Francos*, trans. Robert Levine (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 1997), 260.

and their defensive functions take on yet deeper and more special significance in the context of a song that is also a riddle and that is artfully crafted to suggest meanings that both reveal and protect the identities of the participants in a social, political and love contest played out on the arenas of the courtly life.

William was no stranger to shields decorated with personal identifiers. One of the best known anecdotes of his colorful life involves his boasting, as reported by William of Malmesbury, of wanting to paint on his shield an image of Dangerosa, to bear her in battle as she bore him in bed:

Legitima quoque uxore depulsa, vicecomitis cujusdam conjugem surripuit, quam adeo ardebat ut clypeo suo simulacrum mulierculae insereret; perinde dictitans se illam velle ferre in praelio, sicut illa portabat eum in triclinio (*Gesta Regum Anglorum* V. 439).<sup>73</sup>

[Besides having rejected his legitimate wife, he stole a certain viscount's wife, for whom he was lusting so much that he intended to paint a likeness of the foolish woman on his shield, repeating often that he was willing to carry her in battle, just as she carried him in bed]

William's idea of carrying a picture of Dangerosa on his shield suggests that the use of armorial devices was widespread enough to warrant parody, and that such symbols were intended to represent the causes and ideals, personal accomplishments, reasons for pride, of the individuals carrying the devices. The idea of painting the image of a mistress on a shield must have seemed especially offensive to an Anglo-Norman ecclesiastic like William of Malmesbury, not only because of the adulterous nature of the relationship and the shamelessness of William's statements, but also because of what appears to have been a much more reverent use of armorial decorations on, for example, the arms of crusaders. The more serious choices of symbols by Norman nobility can be surmised from descriptions of armor in Norman literature, such as that of Arthur's shield, in Wace's *Roman de Brut* (ca. 1155), which " ... bore a picture of the Virgin Mary, 'for honour and for remembrance.'"<sup>74</sup> The mixing of martial and spiritual concerns went of course beyond crusader practices and touched on virtually every aspect of the rhetoric of twelfth-century warriors and ecclesiastics, as in the treatise, *Scutum canonicorum* (Shield of canons) of Arno of Reichersberg, a contemporary of William, who was also the author of a *Hexaameron* discussing the ideas of

<sup>73</sup> Bond, *Poetry of William* (see note 19), 128.

<sup>74</sup> Anthony R. Wagner, *Heralds and Heraldry in the Middle Ages*, sec. ed. (1939; London: Oxford University Press, 1960), 12–13. Editor's note: See also the shield carried by the protagonist in the Middle English alliterative romance, *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* (ca. 1370).



Eriugena, as transmitted to him by the also contemporary work of Honorius of Autun, the *Clavis physicae*.<sup>75</sup> Given the dating of the *Clavis* around 1110–1115, corresponding to the years of William's affair with Dangerosa and his separation from Philippa, as well as Honorius's highly praiseful references in the *Clavis* to the fourth-century patron saint of Poitiers, Hilarius Pictavensis – placing him at the top of the list of the *summi catholici* [greatest catholics], alongside Ambrosius, Augustine, and Jerome – it seems more than likely that William derived his knowledge of Eriugena directly from the *Clavis* itself or related texts like Arno's *Hexaameron*.<sup>76</sup> William's allusions to a *contraclau* and his conceit of writing about nothing are both, in that sense, references to the *Clavis physicae* and the negative theology popular at the time and that had originated in the work of Eriugena in the ninth century.

As has been pointed out before, yet other clues as to the significance and mechanics of this song can be found in other of William's own compositions. In his second edition of William's songs, Alfred Jeanroy defined the word *contraclau* as “seconde clef” and added the intriguing comment, “il s'agirait, selon Lavaud, d'un poème de même forme que celui-ci et qui pourrait lui servir de ‘clef’” (this refers, according to [René] Lavaud, to a poem of the same form as this one which can serve as its key).<sup>77</sup> In what appears to be an earlier song of similar form, also in *coblas singulares* of the scheme 8a 8a 8a 4b 8a 4b, “Pos vezem de novel florir,” one of William's most courtly compositions, the statement “tot es niens” (l. 18; everything is nothing) is used to characterize the discouragement of the lover without hope of ever finding satisfaction of his desire. After the bemoaning of his condition and then telling himself of the importance of courtly behavior and showing obedience and submission to the lady, the speaker then states, in two *tornadas*, that his song is to be sent to Narbonne, addressed to “Mon Esteve,” a *senhal* or coded identifier for a mysterious individual, perhaps his mistress or a powerful lord in some way relevant to the

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75 The *Hexaameron* was likely composed by Arno in cooperation with his older brother, Gerhoh/Gerhoch: Peter Classen, *Gerhoch von Reichersberg. Eine Biographie mit einem Anhang über die Quellen, ihre handschriftliche Überlieferung und ihre Chronologie* (Wiesbaden: F. Steiner, 1960), 246–48, 319–21, 433–34, 463.

76 “... de latina autem summi catholici Hilarius Pictaviensis, Ambrosius Mediolanensis, Aurelius Augustinus et Iheronimus auctoritatem exhibeant” (in the Latin language, the greatest catholics, Hilarius of Poitiers, Ambrose of Milan, Aurelius Augustine and Jerome represent the authority): “Auctores de tribus linguis,” §3, *Clavis physicae*, ed. Lucentini (see note 5), 4. There is no comparably praiseful reference to Hilarius in the *Periphyseon*, which suggests Honorius was trying to appeal to someone, perhaps a patron, associated with Poitiers.

77 Jeanroy, *Les Chansons de Guillaume IX* (see note 19), 45.

relationship.<sup>78</sup> Prior to the *tornadas*, the speaker makes mysterious comments, rather riddle-like, challenging the listener to understand the song and hinting at ideas of hidden meanings and commonalities:

Del vers vos dic que mais ne vau  
qui ben l'enten, e n'a plus lau:  
que·ls motz son faitz tug per egau  
communalmens,  
e·l son, et ieu meteus m'en lau,  
bo·s e valens. (ll. 37–42)<sup>79</sup>

[Of the song I tell you that it is more worthy  
to the one who understands it, and so has more honor:  
for the words are made all equally,  
in common,  
and the music, and I myself congratulate myself for that,  
good and worthy.]

Maria Luisa Meneghetti offered an insightful interpretation of this song, identifying “Mon Esteve” as the Count of Blois, Étienne-Henri (d. 1102, while in crusade), and the adored lady as his wife, Adèle of Blois/Adela of Normandy, the daughter of William the Conqueror, mother of Stephen of Blois, King of England (r. 1135–1154), as well as a patron and inspiration of poets like Baudri of Bourgueil.<sup>80</sup> This interpretation is of significant value as it sheds light on the variable identities of the poet’s objects of desire, their prominent positions, and the role of powerful men associated with the beloved lady and acting as mediators of the lover’s passions. The similar features of “Pos vezem ...” and “Farai ... nien” would include then not just a similar poetic structure but also a common formal structure of desire, a thematic identity revolving around a triangular relationship

<sup>78</sup> “Pos vezem de novel florir,” Pillet and Carstens, *Bibliographie* (see note 19), 183.11.

<sup>79</sup> Pasero, *Guglielmo IX* (see note 19), 198.

<sup>80</sup> Maria Luisa Meneghetti, “*Mon Esteve*: à propos du destinataire de Guilhem IX d’Aquitaine dans *Pos vezem de novelh florir*,” *Études de langue et de littérature médiévales offertes à Peter T. Ricketts à l’occasion de son 70ème anniversaire*, ed. Dominique Billy and Ann Buckley (Turnhout: Brepols, 2004/2010), 461–70. Gerald Bond, notes that “already as a very young woman, Adela hired both professional singers (*ioculatores*) and school poets (*uersificatores*) to praise her” (136); “Adela began ordering panegyric while still in her teens” (144); Bond further observes the relations of some of those texts, like the 1109 dedication to Adela of an ecclesiastical history written by Hugh of Sainte-Marie, to political purposes such as “the appropriation of Roman history and historiography which characterized the authors patronized by her father to legitimize his rule” (154): “The Makeup of the Lady: Adela of Blois and the Subject of Praise,” *Loving Subject* (see note 16), 129–57; here 136.

involving questions of identity and geographical locations. In addition to “Pos vezem ...,” I believe yet another composition of William’s, the famous song of the red cat, “Farai un vers pos mi sonelh,” is also relevant to the interpretation of “Farai ... nien,” particularly regarding the *escut* (shield) and its identifying functions. That topic will be explored in a future essay.

The *estui/escut* and the *contraclau* that connect Poitou and Anjou in the song are complex signifiers and part of a riddle that simultaneously refers to William’s mistress, her homeland, the intense political and cultural competition between him and his Angevin neighbors, and also the then-emerging practice of using shields as surfaces to represent and advertise matters of identity. The first attested use of heraldic symbols by European aristocrats, in effect, took place only a year after William’s death, in 1127, in the form of the lions on the shield of Geoffrey Plantagenet, Count of Anjou and founder of the dynasty of kings of England that included Henry II, Richard the Lionheart, and John Lackland.<sup>81</sup>

That William nicknamed his mistress, *Dangerosa Maubergeonne*, after a tower in his domains and joked about self-identification in battle by means of the image of a vassal’s wife on his shield are both indications of the intricate links, in the culture of his time, between matters of identity, feudal relations of lordship and vassalage, sexuality, and property. An identity that depends on such a variety of political, economic, social and libidinal factors is of course very complex, and a far cry from the plain name which an individual might be given at the moment of his birth, which in any case is never independent of familial and other structures.<sup>82</sup> From the twelfth century onward, however, the names

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**81** The precise date of the first use of armorial symbols is a disputed matter. The 1127 date depends on the testimony of the chronicle of Jean de Marmoutier (John of Harmoustier), *Historia Gaufredi Normannorum ducis et comitis Andegavorum*, written around 1175–1180 (“*Leonculus aureos habentibus muniuntur ... boots embroidered with golden lions were drawn on his legs ... Clypeus Leonculos aureos imaginarios habens collo ejus suspenditur ... a shield with lions of gold therein was hung about his neck*”: Arthur Charles Fox-Davies, *A Complete Guide to Heraldry* [London: Jack, 1909], 173); and an enamel funeral plaque, from ca. 1155–1160, depicting Geoffrey with an azure shield bearing lions rampant and wearing a headpiece also featuring a lion: Michel Pastoureau, *L’Art héraldique au Moyen Âge* (Paris: Seuil, 2009), 26–28, and notes 16 & 17. Also Wagner, *Heralds and Heraldry* (see note 75), 15–16; and J. H. & R. V. Pinches, *The Royal Heraldry of England* (Rutland, VT: Charles E Tuttle, 1974), 13–14, 20.

**82** William’s identity and legitimacy were a contested matter from the moment of his birth, as he was considered a bastard by the Church due to the consanguinity of his parents, Gui-Geoffroi (William VIII) and Audearde of Burgundy. In 1076, Gui-Geoffroi traveled to Rome to obtain a dispensation, directly from Pope Gregory VII, legitimizing the birth of his son. As Bezzola notes, it is likely that William’s aunt, the former Empress Agnes (ca. 1025–1077), who

and associated symbolic devices of entitled worthies were to have the specifically dynastic, hereditary, hierarchical and land-owning features that we associate with true heraldic symbolism. William lived at the time when those symbols, and the subjected humans denoted by their imagery, were just being born, *ex nihilo*, or so they thought, and delivered onto the stage of western history.

The reasons for the rise of the negativity of philosophical reflection during the Middle Ages are related, I claim, to the growing complexity of power structures – from the Holy Roman/Carolingian empire to the Norman kingdom of England, the Angevin empire, and the Capetian domain of France – that made individuals feel ever more dependent and insignificant relative to the complex powers they served and which either granted or denied them identity and honor. Negativity, in that context, reflects the voiding of the subject of intrinsic meaning and the deferral of such meaning to a higher power situated upwards on a metaphorical ladder of ontological and other values. As per the logic of negativity, however, that higher power can itself be suspect of being empty of ultimate significance and in need of an even higher entity to justify it. Thinkers like Eriugena in the ninth century were not atheists or nihilists, but clearly they were dissatisfied with the arrogance and pretentious discourses of theologians and of the institutions of the time, including the claims of the Carolingians, and the Church that backed them, to be the vicars of God's empire on earth. As such, negative theology was a way, rather early modern, of questioning formalities, ceremonies, rituals and other hypocrisies of authorities lacking in real moral and spiritual substance. God could still be real, but not the same as the God imagined and worshipped by earthly powers. Such reasoning came handy to someone like William because he too felt besieged by the growing powers of his own time, secular and ecclesiastic, as they were embodied, in particular, in the culture and institutions of the neighboring Anjou. William looked toward such powers with a mixture of desire, envy, and hate, the hallmarks of emulative passions, particularly in their erotic forms. Such reasoning also served Dante in his meditations on earthly and heavenly empire, and particularly in his questioning of a badly corrupt Church.

Though postmodern figures like Derrida claimed to have created something novel, it is in fact Eriugena, and prior to him a long line of Neoplatonists and Platonists, who deserve the credit for having first developed a line of critical thought that pointed to the emptiness of signifiers, especially when a corrupt language, such as that of sophists, theologians, lawyers, and also literary

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lived in retirement at Rome from 1065 to 1077, played a role in the facilitation of those negotiations: "Guillaume IX" (see note 25), 166–67.

theorists for that matter, is seen to hold no meaning and to serve only selfish interests, rather than the pursuit of truth, beauty, justice, and the common good. As for William, he was no hero of any such high-minded quests. But he was indeed a very witty, intelligent, and daring braggart who, while pursuing his own lusts and always furious at his rivals, managed to say a few amusing and not entirely unenlightening things that continue to be relevant to the understanding of our own, very troubled and confused we should say, postmodern subjectivities.



Jessica K. Zeitler

## Ladies, Warriors and Genies: Imagining Gender and Power in *The Book of the Tales of Ziyad Ibn Amir al-Kinani*

The appearance of ladies, princess warriors, and genies<sup>1</sup> is a rather common phenomenon in the oral and written narratives of the Near and Middle East. In fact, when readers think of female protagonists in medieval Arabic popular literature they often immediately recall Shahrazad the famed storyteller from tales of the *One Thousand and One Nights*, with the earliest known fragment dating from the tenth century,<sup>2</sup> or the heroic princess warrior Fatima Dhat al-Himma from *Sirat al-amirah Dhat al-Himmah*<sup>3</sup> from the mid-twelfth century. Becoming emblematic of the tales themselves, these two narratives are notably imbued with diverse female characters including virtuous ladies, untrustworthy treacherous women, and even honorable warrior princesses. What is less common, however, is the presence of the magical female *jinniya*. It is with that presence in mind that I examine the *Tales of Ziyad Ibn 'Amir al-Kinani*,<sup>4</sup> which stems from the same oral storytelling tradition and frame structure of the

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1 Readers will intermittently see the use of the Arabic word for female genie throughout this article (Arabic: female singular- *jinniya*-). Cowan Wehr and J. Milton Cowan, *A Dictionary of Modern Written Arabic*. 3d rev. ed. (Ithaca, NY: Spoken Language Services, 1971), 164. They define *jinn* or the female *jinniya* as “demons (invisible beings, either harmful or helpful, that interfere with the lives of mortals).”

2 *The Arabian Nights Encyclopedia*, ed. Ulrich Marzolph and Richard van Leeuwen, 2 vols. (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2004).

3 Shawqi Abd- al-Ḥakīm, *Princess Dhat Al Himma: The Princess of High Resolve*, trans. Omais Abou-Bakr (Guizeh, Egypt: Ministry of Culture, Egypt, Foreign Cultural Relations, Foreign Cultural Information Dept., 1995).

4 *Zeyyad ben Amir el de Quinena*, trans. Francisco Fernández y González (Madrid: Imprenta de Fortanet, 1882); The Spanish version of this text by Don Francisco Fernandez y Gonzalez, *Historia de Zeyyad ben Amir el de Quinena*, is not regularly accessible through the online library system. Those interested in obtaining a copy would want to search or contact the Biblioteca del Escorial, MS Árabes 1876. There has been an additional manuscript recently discovered in the Biblioteca Nacional de Madrid, identified as G. g. 195, which appears to be a later extant copy. Al-Shenawi published a recent edition of this work in Arabic, *Kitab fihi hadith Ziyad ibn 'Amir al-Kinani*, ed. Al-Ali al-Gharib Muhammad Al-Shenawi (Cairo: Maktabat al-Adab, 2009).

Jessica K. Zeitler, Pima Community College, Tucson, AZ, USA

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*Thousand and One Nights* and incorporates numerous common motifs from the medieval Arabic epic (*sirat*) of the hero and his journey, yet it originates from the geographically and chronologically distinct space of al-Andalus (southern regions of medieval Iberia and Northern Africa). What is more, the portrayal of such a diverse group of extraordinary female protagonists, particularly the appearance of the good Muslim *jinniya*, in a singular narrative work is especially unique and a rare occurrence within the spatial context of medieval Iberia.

Up to this day the *Tales of Ziyad Ibn 'Amir al-Kinani* narrative has received limited scholarly attention and warrants further examination.<sup>5</sup> This article will explore two elements that shape the exceptional nature of the narrative. The first and more tangible element is how the portrayal of three of the female characters transforms them into extraordinary and fantastic beings. While only the *jinniya*, as a spirit, imaginal being, maintains magical and fantastic abilities throughout the narrative, the description itself of the other two female protagonists surpasses the ordinary in physical feats and beauty. The second part of the analysis focuses on the transformation itself of the female characters, particularly the *jinniya* protagonist, throughout the narrative relative to the social order of their spatial environment.

I argue that the representation of power, gender, and social order are intrinsically tied to the socio-spatial environment in which these women appear. Moreover, this analysis will show that fantastic environments and beings evoke increased flexible social mores, contradicting, even for non-magical beings, the normal restrictions on social roles of women during the time.

Once heralded the Jewel of the World by Arabic historians,<sup>6</sup> medieval al-Andalus, or more specifically, Cordoba, during the tenth century Umayyad Caliphate, was famed not only as one of the most advanced cities in the West, but also known for its intellectual, political, and cultural *milieu*. Between the ninth and twelfth centuries, al-Andalus embodied such a culturally diverse and

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5 Marcelino Menéndez Pelayo, *Orígenes de la novela* (Madrid: Bailly Bailliere, 1925), xliii–xlv; Ángel González Palencia, *Historia de la literatura arábigoespañola* (Barcelona: Editorial Labor, 1945), 346; David A. Wacks, “Ziyad Ibn ‘Amir Al-Kinani as Andalusī Muslim Crusade Literature,” *The Study of Al-Andalus: The Scholarship and Legacy of James T. Monroe*, ed. Michelle M. Hamilton and David Wacks (Cambridge, MA: ILEX Foundation: Harvard University Press, 2018), 213–30. Also see David A. Wacks, “Popular Andalusī Literature and Castilian Fiction: Ziyad Ibn ‘Amir Al-Kinani, 101 Nights, and Caballero Zifar,” *Revista de Poética Medieval* 29 (2015): 311–35.

6 Aḥmad Ibn Muḥammad Maqqarī (ca. 1578–1632) wrote on the history of Al-Andalus in his most important work, *Nafḥ Al-ṭīb Min Ghuṣn Al-Andalus Al-raṭīb Wa-dhikr Waziriha Lisān Al-Dīn Ibn Al-Khaṭīb* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1855), translated as (*The Breath of Perfume*). His work described the lifestyles of people and main Andalusian cities.



continuously mutating spatial climate that scholars have spent careers investigating the topic.<sup>7</sup>

The socio-political *Zeitgeist* of medieval al-Andalus has yet to be cogently defined due to its breadth of cultural, linguistic, and socio-historical influences. What has been more common in the academic field is the investigation and representation of a singular purview, the Christian, Jewish, or Islamic cultural traditions and relations that shaped the historic period and its socio-cultural spatial boundaries within medieval al-Andalus. In recent years however, medieval Andalusí and Mediterranean studies have come to the forefront of medieval research examining the interaction of all three cultures.

During the Middle Ages, al-Andalus functioned as a nexus where the medieval East and West collided, intermingled, and forged new cultural efflorescence. Whether at peace or at war the natural give and take of cultural syncretism continually reshaped the Iberian sociocultural landscape. Together with the increased general interest in medieval al-Andalus, studies on women within this multicultural, multilingual, porous environment have also gained new ground.<sup>8</sup> As we will see soon, the narrative *Tales of Ziyad Ibn 'Amir al-Kinani* stands out because it presents these chronologically marginal yet textually central women not only as exceptional beauties, but also as fierce fantastic women flourishing in what would at that time be considered men's spaces.

The medieval narrative at hand, written in Arabic, was found within a collection of eight other manuscripts in 1882 by Don Francisco Fernandez y Gonzalez in the codex MS Árabes 1876 housed in the Escorial Library outside of

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7 Ángel González Palencia, *Historia De La Literatura Árábigo-Española*. 2nd ed. rev. ed. (Barcelona: Editorial Labor, 1945); Américo Castro, *España en su Historia: Cristianos, Moros y Judíos* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Losada, 1948); Evariste Lévi-Provençal, *La Civilisation Arabe en Espagne: Vue Générale*. 3rd ed. (Paris: G. P. Maisonneuve, 1961); Rachel Arié, *Historia de España*, vol. III, *La España musulmana: Siglos VIII–XV*, ed. Manuel Tuñón de Lara (Barcelona: Labor, 1984).

8 Celia Del Moral Molina, "Contribución a la Historia de la mujer a través de las fuentes literarias andalusíes," *La sociedad medieval através de la literatura hispanojudía*, ed. Ricardo Izquierdo Benito and Ángel Saenz-Badillos Pérez (Cuenca: Universidad de Castilla-La Mancha, 1998), 101–22; María Isabel Fierro Bello, "Mujeres hispano-árabes en tres repertorios biográficos: Yadwa, Sila y Bugya," *Actas de las II Jornadas de Investigación Interdisciplinaria: Las mujeres medievales en su ámbito jurídico* (Madrid: Universidad Autónoma, 1983), 177–82; Teresa Garulo Muñoz, *Diwan de las poetisas de Al-Ándalus* (Madrid: Hipérior, 1986).

Manuela Marín Niño, "Las mujeres en al-Ándalus: Fuentes e historiografía," *Árabes, judías y cristianas: Mujeres en la Europa Medieval*, ed. Celia Del Moral Molina (Granada: Universidad de Granada, 1993), 35–52; Ana Ruth Vidal Luengo, "Mujeres excéntricas en la literatura árabe oral: Sultanas, Hechiceras, 'Liberadas'," *Metáforas de perversidad. Percepción y representación de lo femenino en el ámbito literario y artístico*, ed. Ángeles Mateo del Pino y Gregorio Rodríguez Herrera (Las Palmas de Gran Canaria: Mapfre-Guanarteme, 2005), 55–74.

Madrid. Fernandez y Gonzalez translated the manuscript into Spanish as the *Libro de la historia de Zeyyad ben amir el de Quinena*,<sup>9</sup> adding a brief prologue describing the reason for his interest in the forty-two page extant narrative, comparing it to the *novelas de caballería* (chivalric romances) while simultaneously likening it to the famed medieval Arabic frame-tale narrative *One Thousand and One Nights*.<sup>10</sup> Since this narrative is only available in Spanish and Arabic, for the purposes of this article my working translation of the Arabic title is as follows: *The Book of Tales of Ziyad Ibn 'Amir al-Kinani and the Marvels and Strange Things that Happened to him in the Palace of Al-Lau'alib and the Lake of Wonders*,<sup>11</sup> which I continue to refer to as *Tales of Ziyad Ibn 'Amir al-Kinani*. Fernandez y Gonzalez dated the extant manuscript post the Almoravid Dynasty – that ended ca. 1147 – and situated its production during the Almohad Dynasty in the early thirteenth century. Geographical references to the Strait of Gibraltar and, more specifically, the use of the Benu-Hilel and Quinenies family names from Jaen and Granada also link the origin of the text to al-Andalus. While it is this Andalusí culturally syncretic environment and time frame that influenced the appearance of *Tales of Ziyad Ibn 'Amir al-Kinani* in al-Andalus, the gendered social spaces in which the female characters materialize play an equally fundamental role their fantastical representation of power and beauty.

## Echoing Gendered Space in the Twelfth-Century Medieval Hispano-Arab Narrative

Academic interest and research on the topic of medieval al-Andalus and, more specifically, gendered space within the physical and literary Andalusí

<sup>9</sup> Fernández y González, *Zeyyad ben Amir el de Quinena* (see note 4).

<sup>10</sup> Richard van Leeuwen, one of the most well-known and respected modern scholars on *The Thousand and One Nights*, states that while the original source of the *One Thousand and One Nights* is still unclear, the Antoine Galland (1646–1715) version edited in 1984 by Muhsin Mahdi, probably represents the oldest surviving version. Muhsin Mahdi, *The Thousand and One Nights* (Leiden and New York: Brill, 1995). Richard van Leeuwen, *The Thousand and One Nights: Space, Travel and Transformation* (New York: Routledge, 2007), 3–4.

<sup>11</sup> لكتاب فيه حديث زياد بن عامر الكناني وما جرى عليه من العجائب والغرائب بقصر اللوالب وبحيرة الكتاب *kitab fih hdith zyad bn a'amr alknani wma jra a'lih mn ala'jaa'b walghraa'b bksr alloualb wbihrah ala'jb*. This is the original Arabic title and transliterated title of the manuscript which I have translated into English for the purpose of this article.

context has seen a marked increase since the late 1980s.<sup>12</sup> This research has provided a blueprint drawing connection between the Andalusi social frameworks, in this case the dominant Muslim and Christian patriarchal social orders, as well as the socio-cultural spaces, both physical and imagined, that said systems shaped. Spatial order in medieval al-Andalus was defined by a similar *mélange* that has been noted in that world where Muslim, Christian, and Jewish cultural norms overlapped and often were inseparable as they reflected the condition not only of the religion itself, but the position of gender in relationship to the economic and social development of the Andalusi society at the time. In this sense, both dominant Muslim and Christian medieval cultural practices in al-Andalus were characterized by a feudal patriarchal system where most women were relegated to private spaces. Most commonly private spaces were linked to the daily duties of the wife, the mother, and the homemaker.<sup>13</sup> Women of lower social classes, however, often did and were able to move more freely in society and were less regulated than women of elevated classes as their social roles and related duties determined their access.<sup>14</sup> In this sense, it was expected that a slave or ladies' servant would be in public spaces like the market running errands for her lady. In *Las mujeres en al-Ándalus: Un estado de la cuestión* Diego Merino de Valle reiterates this framework stating that,

Lo que parece claro es que las mujeres de familia humilde tenían mucha más libertad de movimiento que las de elevada condición social ... En las ciudades, en cambio, solo las

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**12** María Jesús Viguera Molíns, *La mujer en Al-Ándalus: Reflejos históricos de su actividad y categorías sociales* (Madrid and Sevilla: Universidad Autónoma/Ediciones Andaluzas Unidas, 1989), 105–25; María Jesús Viguera Molíns, “A Borrowed Space: Andalusí and Maghribí Women in Chronicles,” *Writing the Feminine: Women in Arab Sources*, ed. Manuela Marín and Randi Deguilhem (London and New York: L. B. Tauris, 2002), 165–80; here 165. Rafael Valencia, “La mujer y el espacio público de las ciudades andalusíes,” *Saber y vivir: mujer, antigüedad y medievo*, ed. María Isabel Calero Secall and Rosa Francia Somalo (Málaga: Universidad de Málaga, 1996), 115–25.

**13** Manuela Marín Niño, “Las mujeres de las clases sociales superiores: Al-Ándalus, desde la conquista a finales del califato de Córdoba,” *La mujer en Al-Ándalus: Reflejos históricos de su actividad y categorías sociales*, ed. María Jesús Viguera Molíns (Madrid and Sevilla: Universidad Autónoma/Ediciones Andaluzas Unidas, 1989), 105–25.

**14** For the situation of traveling women in early modern Spain, see María Dolores Morillo, “Mobility, Space and the Pícaro's Identity in Alonso de Salas Barbadillo's *La hija de Celestina*,” *Travel, Time, and Space in the Middle Ages and Early Modern Time: Explorations of Worldly Perceptions and Processes of Identity Formation*, ed. Albrecht Classen. *Fundamentals of Medieval and Early Modern Culture*, 22 (Berlin and Boston: Walter de Gruyter, 2018), 563–84.

sirvientas o esclavas podrían circular por los espacios públicos, mientras que sus señoras permanecían tras los muros del domicilio guardando su honra.<sup>15</sup>

[That which seems clear is that women of humble families had much more freedom of movement than those of elevated social status ... In cities, however, only servants and slaves could circulate through public spaces, while their ladies stayed behind the household walls protecting their honor.]<sup>16</sup>

María Jesús Viguera Molíns and Robert Brunschvig have also emphasized the restrictions associated with gender and social class within the medieval Andalusí context. Molíns explains that, “The restrictions of a woman’s role as a producer-consumer in al-Andalus is characteristic of their confinement to the private sphere, not only in Islamic societies, including the Andalusí one, but also in the ancient, medieval, modern and contemporary Christian society.”<sup>17</sup> Moreover, she confirms that public versus private spheres are even regulated further by categories including not only gender, but also age, and freedom or lack of it. Molíns examines the Quranic verses II, 228 and IV, 34 in the context of al-Andalus.

En este sentido, la lectura de El Corán debe interpretar- se no como la inferioridad de las mujeres con respecto a los hombres sino como reparto de papeles. Es decir, que ambos sexos, siendo como son de naturaleza completamente distinta, están destinados a desempeñar papeles vitales asimismo diferentes y, sin embargo, complementarios. De modo que, en consonancia con esas características particulares, al varón le corresponde el cometido de ser protector y proveedor mientras que a la mujer se le encomienda la tarea de ser esposa, madre y ama de casa. Dicha división de papeles ha producido también una fractura en los espacios de tal manera que, la realidad social se escinde entre el espacio doméstico y el espacio público.<sup>18</sup>

[In this sense, the discourse of the Quran should be interpreted- not as the inferiority of women in respect to men, but rather, as a division of roles. That is that both sexes, being as they are naturally completely distinct, are destined to fill different vital roles and as such, complementary. In this way, in line with these particular characteristics, the male is suited to being the protector and provider while the female is charged with the duties of being a wife, mother and lady of the house. Said division of roles has also produced a fracture of the spaces in such a way that, the social reality splits between domestic space and public space.]

<sup>15</sup> Diego Merino del Valle, *Las mujeres en al-Ándalus: Un estado de la cuestión* (Alcalá: Universidad de Alcalá, 2014), 1–38; here 12.

<sup>16</sup> For the purposes of this article, I have provided the translations in English unless otherwise noted.

<sup>17</sup> Viguera Molíns, “A Borrowed Space” (see note 12), 165.

<sup>18</sup> “... Los hombres tienen sobre ellas preeminencia ...” (II, 228; ... Men have pre-eminence over them ...); “Los hombres están por encima de las mujeres, porque Dios ha favorecido a uno respecto a otros” (IV, 38; Men are above women, because God has favored one over the other). commentary.

While these doctrines are representative of the divisions that commonly characterized female roles in medieval Andalusí society, there are also documented exceptional females worthy of note who transgressed the social norms for their gender. Wallada bint al-Mustakfi (1001–1091) has been documented as one of these remarkable Andalusí women who did not follow the gender norms of her time.<sup>19</sup> Many of Wallada's intellectual and social activities were deemed as scandalous and inappropriate for a woman, especially of her status. She was criticized not only for her poetic writings, literary salon, clothing, and also her relationships outside of wedlock. The power of her elevated social status not only gave her access to masculine spaces, particularly after the death of her father when she was left to reign, but also opened her to considerable social critic. Women, like Wallada, who held or influenced positions of power that were considered to belong to men and identified as masculine space, tended to be highly criticized. Diego Merino de Valle affirms this notion observing:

En una sociedad medieval de corte patriarcal como la andalusí, la opinión pública mayoritaria desaprobaba cualquier tipo de intervención femenina dentro de las actividades políticas y, por tanto, bélicas.<sup>20</sup>

[In a medieval society of the patriarchal court like that of Andalusia, the majority public opinion disapproved of any type of female intervention among the political activities, and therefore, martial.]

It is in this manner that women occasionally defied these socio-cultural molds defined by the period and religious doctrines. Such documented examples including those few extraordinary women like Wallada bint al-Mustakfi and women appearing in Arabic biographical dictionaries that acknowledged intellectual activities of medieval women, particularly poets, alongside their medieval male counterparts demonstrates that not all women remained within the

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**19** Wallada bint al-Mustakfi was born in Cordoba in 1001 and died in 1091. She was a renowned poet and daughter of the last Umayyad Caliph in Cordoba. Reinhart Pieter Anne Dozy and Magdalena Fuentes, *Historia de los musulmanes de España* (Barcelona: Editorial Iberia, 1954).

Teresa Garulo, *Diwan de las poetisas andaluzas de Al-Andalus* (Madrid: Ediciones Hiperión, 1985); Gloria López de la Plaza, *Al-Andalus: Mujeres, sociedad y religión* (Málaga: Universidad de Málaga, 1992); Mahmud Sobh, *Poetisas árabe-andaluzas* (Granada: Diputación Provincial, 1994).

**20** Merino de Valle, *Las mujeres en al-Ándalus* (see note 15), 13. "In a patriarchal court of medieval society, like that of al-Andalus, the public opinion disapproved of any type of feminine intervention within political and military activities." Also see Manuela Marín Niño: "Las mujeres de las clases sociales superiores" (see note 13). See also the famous case of Leonor López de Córdoba (1363–1430); cf. Albrecht Classen, *Reading Medieval European Women Writers: Strong Literary Witnesses from the Past* (Frankfurt a. M., Bern, et al.: Peter Lang, 2016), 151–83.

limiting patriarchal norms prescribed to them.<sup>21</sup> While women of higher social status had considerably more access to such masculine spaces of power, they were also exposed to public opinion often discouraging such non-conforming activities.

Just as we have contemplated the socio-spatial limitations placed on women of medieval al-Andalus, we now have to consider also the imagined fictional spaces that appear in *Tales of Ziyad Ibn 'Amir al-Kinani* and their relationship with female protagonists.

The *Tales of Ziyad Ibn 'Amir al-Kinani* portrays female roles and power within its imagined space as fluctuating. The work characterizes women's roles as adaptable, moving between the traditional patriarchal normative roles, as a wife or submissive captive, and more liberated roles linking them to the peripheral spaces. These non-centric peripheral spaces, often seen as undefined spaces in the *Tales of Ziyad Ibn 'Amir al-Kinani*, include even the desert, as well as marvelous spaces like the enchanted Alcazar de al-Lualib and the magical cave and palace of the genies. All of these places could be described as giving a feeling of nowhere-ness, through their bewitching sense of timelessness. While one might expect that the peripheral spaces would appear like that reflected in history, often relegated to women of lower social status (servants, prostitutes, and women living in rural areas) who characteristically had more freedom and access to what would be typically defined male public spaces, the peripheral spaces within the *Tales of Ziyad Ibn 'Amir al-Kinani* were allocated to fantastic and exceptional women of elevated social status. As I will soon demonstrate, Sade the princess warrior, Rafidato al-Chamel the beautiful archer, Al-Chahia-the princess warrior, and Jatifa al-Horr the shapeshifting-genie commence their journey in roles seemingly liberated from the social norms.

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<sup>21</sup> *Tamīlka* by Ibn al-Abbar and *Dayl* by al-Marrakusi provides the most biographical information on female intellectuals. Ibn al-Abbar, *Al-Takmila li-kitab al-Sila*, BAH, v. V–VI. ed. Francisco Codera (Madrid: Centro de Estudios Históricos, 1915); *Miscelánea de Estudios y textos árabes*, ed. Maximiliano Alarcón and Cándido Ángel González Palencia (Madrid: E. Maestre, 1915), 147–690; Ibn 'Abd al-Malik al-Marrakusi, *Al-Dayl wa-l-takmila*, V. I–1–2, VIII–2, ed. M. Ibn Sarifa (Beirut: Dar al-Taqa, 1964 and 1965); *Kitab ak-Aghani*, “The Book of Songs,” from the tenth century by Abu al-Faraj is one of the earlier sources that documented the songs and biographical information of composers, poets, and musicians, including the *yawari* (female slaves) that were trained in many arts in order to entertain their masters. Muḥammad Abū Faḍl Ibrāhīm and Dār Al-Kutub Al-Miṣriyah, *Kitāb Al-aghānī*, ed. Al-Ṭab'ah (Cairo, Egypt: Maktabah Al-'Arabiyah, 1970).

## Daring and Dangerous Women in the *Tales of Ziyad*: Transgressing Norms

Discussing three of the main female protagonists of the *Tales of Ziyad Ibn 'Amir al-Kinani*, I argue that the extraordinary women of the text, Sade, Al-Chahia, and Jatifa al-Horr, are also women who violate socio-spatial norms for women of their time. They not only find themselves fighting as men on the battlefield, but also emerge in spaces and circumstances themselves who elude social norms. Accordingly, as the imagined spaces define socio-spatial frameworks of the period they simultaneously evoke the marvelous, exceptional, and the fantastic descriptions of its female characters.

The narrative commences in the famed court of Abbasid Caliph Harun al-Rashid. In the same way as seen in *One Thousand and One Nights*, Ziyad has been summoned by the Caliph to narrate his adventures. The story portrays our protagonist Ziyad, as a noble hero, a handsome prince, and adventurer who by the end of his travels has courted and married five extraordinary women: 1. Sade the princess warrior; 2. Rafidato al-Chamel, the beautiful archer; 3. Al-Chahia, the princess warrior also known as Serene Sky (*Cielo Sereno*); 4. Jatifa al-Horr, the shapeshifting-genie-mother-protector of man; and finally, 5. Zaidat Ox-Xachal, who beholds the beauty of the moon. There are other equally interesting, however less developed, women that Ziyad does not marry, but who play fascinating characters including: the dead widow of Sad Ben Malic and Bercanyaluh – *Luciente rayo* (bolt of lightning) – the black slave warrior and the love interest of Ziyad's servant Quebranta-piedras (destroyer of rocks). Here I will examine the character description and relative spatial access of Sade, the princess warrior and first wife, Alchahia, the princess warrior who dresses and fights in a man's skin to rule her lands after the death of her father, and Jatifa al-Horr the shapeshifting *jimiya*, mother, and defender of humankind.

Ziyad meets his first wife, the princess Sade, after receiving a mysterious messenger and letter at his palace. The letter in brief states that:

... has de saber que tiempo ha me solicitan para esposa caudillos de los árabes; pero me he opuesto a que llegue a poseer mis estados otro ninguno que aquel que me venciére, peleando conmigo en batalla. Al presente ha venido a mi campamento el llamado Alchamuh, con quien estoy peleando hace seis mese(s), más como haya tenido noticia de tu persona y de lo que refiere la fama sobre tu esfuerzo y valentía, he resuelto escribirte, a fin de que vengas a verme, por si acaso fuere esto ocasión de que yo sea tu esposa y tu mi marido.<sup>22</sup>

22 Fernández y González, *Zeyyad ben Amir el de Quinena* (see note 4), 7.

[... you must know that for a time Arab commanders have been suiting me as wife; but I have refused that they possess my states/belongings no other than he who defeats me in battle. Alchamuh has come to my camp with whom I have been fighting for six months, and with the news of you and the fame of your strength and valiance, I have succumbed to write to you so that you come to see me, and if were to be the case, that I be your wife and you my husband.]

After hearing from his father that Sade “es la más hermosa para quien ha amanecido el Sol y se ha puesto en el ocaso” (is the most beautiful for whom the sun has risen and fallen),<sup>23</sup> Ziyad eagerly goes to meet his fate. Upon his arrival he views what he believes are men in battle and quickly asks a bystander, “¿Quiénes son esto dos paladines?” (Who are these two warriors?) As we might expect, the response is that they are not knights or warriors, but one being the princess Sade and the other, the Caliph Alchamuh who is battling her for her hand in marriage. Prince al-Kinani describes his soon-to-be-wife through expressions of shock, “¡Válgame Dios y qué muchacha!” (Oh my God and what a woman). He even questions her brutality as she battles and defeats Alchamuh, “¿No tienes madre, ni padre?” (Do you not have a mother, or father?), suggesting that her extraordinary and savage defeat of this caliph was beyond what he could have imagined. The narrative describes her as a heroine and a staggering combatant, proclaiming to the caliph listening to his story that her ability in battle is incredible. In a contrasting fashion, as Ziyad defeats Sade and removes her turban, her extraordinary skills in battle transform into a description of exceptional beauty. Sade is described as possessing the beauty of the full moon. Once Sade is defeated, her father, Tariq-ben-Amir Alhiléli quickly gives his consent for Ziyad to marry his daughter.

In *Warrior Women in Arabic Popular Romance*, Remke Kruk defines warrior women as “such women as are trained in the chivalrous arts of fighting and combat.”<sup>24</sup> While Kruk highlights that in the Arab tradition and particularly within the *Nights* tradition these warrior women are common female protagonists, she also insists that she has purposely avoided the word Amazon, as these stem from a distinct literary tradition and have connotations far removed from works related to the *Arabian Nights Traditions*.<sup>25</sup> We see some of the most well-known warrior women of the *Nights* tales, Abriza and Shawahi, in the story of ‘Umar an-Nu’mān. Similar to these female protagonists, is the famed princess warrior Dhat al-Himma from the *Sirat al-amira Dhat al-Himma*. Once promised to Ziyad for marriage, Sade plays a less dominant and prominent

<sup>23</sup> Fernández y González, *Zeyyad ben Amir el de Quinena* (see note 4), 7.

<sup>24</sup> Remke Kruk, “Warrior Women in Arabic Popular Romance: Qannāṣa Bint Muzāḥim and Other Valiant Ladies. Part One,” *Journal of Arabic Literature* 24.3 (1993): 213–30; here 214.

<sup>25</sup> Kruk, “Warrior Women in Arabic Popular Romance” (see note 24), 214.



role. She does appear in the next story as captive of Alchamuh who could not accept his defeat to Sade and subsequent loss of his future wife to Ziyad. While in this role, Sade's warrior-like abilities are downplayed, in future chapters she resurfaces as prominent lady and leader of her tribe. This fluctuating role as dominant, submissive, and, then the return to dominant, powerful and exceptional are interestingly indicative of her spatial relativity.

That is to say that on the battlefield, dressed as a warrior, occupying a typical male role, she is described as possessing an exhaustive, almost fantastical hyper masculine dominance and martial skill. Off the battlefield, returned to the court, Sade is described as hyper feminine submissive, revealing almost a sense of loss of power, gladly accepting her fate as wife of Ziyad. Before Ziyad can retrieve the dowry, Sade is kidnapped by Alchamuh and taken to his castle. Within this very patriarchal setting, she again plays a submissive role. Finally, after having been freed and returning to her lands, she briefly appears as the leader of a search party in the desert when her beloved, Ziyad, has been lost and is rumored as dead. In other words, the environments, or social spaces, in which Sade appears also fluctuate between centric patriarchal and peripherally undefined spaces like the desert.

Similar to his first wife Sade, Ziyad meets his third wife, Alchahia (Cielo Sereno-Serene Sky) on the battlefield. After having lost his fellow knights as captives to the guardian of the magical palace of Al-Lualib that sinks into the lagoon every night at dusk, he decides he must also face the guardian of the palace and free his friends from their captivity. After many days of unending grueling battle where the guardian retreats to spend the night in his palace, Ziyad finds another option. With the help of a white-haired old woman he is able to sneak into the underwater palace in order to save his friends and the one hundred maiden princesses that were also rumored captive of the powerful guardian. Ziyad, however, also feels a duty to face the guardian whom he had fought for days on end. When he finally finds the guardian sleeping, he sneaks up to kill him, but he decides he must see his face before performing the deed. To his surprise he sees that the guardian is wearing a mask made of a man's skin and beneath it is the beautiful maiden Alchahia. His description of her beauty combined with her fierce martial skills outweighs any of the other descriptions of his other women in the *Tales of Ziyad Ibn 'Amir al-Kinani*:

... una doncella hermosísima, y tal, que no han podido contemplarla más bella los dotados de vista, ni describirla más perfecta y llena de gracia los autores de descripciones, como que parecían derramadas en todo su cuerpo la hermosura y la luz refulgente. Semejaban sus ojos dos fuentes que convidan con su proximidad al sediento; sus mejillas eran rojas como las rosas de los jardines; sus cabellos capaces de alentar y conmover las cenizas; su rostro todo presentaba la belleza de la flor de granado y despedía brillo como la luna, ó las perlas ensartadas, ó como un marjal con abundante agua; su cuello era de cristal ... tanto era su

gallardía y el brillo de su hermosura! ... que mantenía batalla con la dama, la cual fué tan terrible, que á tanto esfuerzo hubiera encanecido un niño y se hubiera fundido el hierro.<sup>26</sup>

[... a most beautiful maiden, and such, that no one has been able to contemplate more blessed beauty, nor could authors describe her as more perfect and full of grace, as if her whole body exuded beauty and a splendid light. Her eyes appeared as two fountains that invited thirst upon proximity; her cheeks were red like roses in the gardens; her hair capable of reviving and exciting ashes; her entire face presented the beauty of the flower of the pomegranate tree and emitted light like the moon, or a string of pearls, or like a marsh with abundance of water; her neck was of crystal; ... so much was her bravery and brilliance of her beauty! ... that I continued to battle with the maiden, that which was so terrible, that with so much force it would have greyed a child and melted iron.]

Ziyad eventually overtakes the mysterious guardian-princess Alchahia (Serene Sky). The beautiful and fierce princess explains that she has spent years, since the king's, her father's death, dressed as a male in battle to retain control and power over her reign, the palace, and to maintain respect of the surrounding caliphs. In bargaining with Ziyad to release her, he requests her hand in marriage, and she quickly agrees. In this manner, Alchahia is similar to Sade, she is a fierce warrior in battle, but once defeated, becomes a very accommodating wife, first revealing her gender to her subjects, and then announcing the new monarch and ruler of her lands and subjects, Ziyad. Alchahia's extraordinary beauty and martial skills correspond with similar extraordinary descriptions of the magical palace of Al-Lau'alib. Once married, Alchahia descends into the narrative background as Ziyad has now taken her position of power.

As Ziyad's tales and therefore, adventures, continue, the thread that ties these fantastic women to their empowerment is their arrival in spaces that are lacking in a defined social framework. That is to say that undefined or nowhere spaces lend to the liberation of the female characters of this narrative. This pattern is repeated for many of the female protagonists as we will especially see highlighted through Ziyad's encounter with Jatifa al-Horr, the shapeshifting-genie.

As his fourth wife, Jatifa al-Horr is by far one of the most intriguing female characters of the narrative because she embodies multiple roles within the Arabic literary tradition, the *jinniya*, the gazelle, the mother, and finally, the guardian of man (humankind). First and foremost, Jatifa is a *jinniya*. The University of Columbia Encyclopedia defines a *jinni* as:

Jinni (jīnē'), feminine jinniyah (jīnēyā'), in Arabic and Islamic folklore, spirit or demon endowed with supernatural power. In ancient belief the jinn were associated with the

<sup>26</sup> Fernández y González, *Zeyyad ben Amir el de Quinena* (see note 4), 25–26.

destructive forces of nature. In Islamic tradition they were corporeal spirits similar to men in appearance but having certain supernatural powers, especially those of changing in size and shape. Capable of both good and evil, the jinn were popular in literatures of the Middle East, notably in the stories of the Thousand and One Nights.<sup>27</sup>

While the *jinni* found popularity in Arabic narratives during pre-Islamic and Islamic times, its appearance is most commonly masculine. Its manifestation in medieval Iberia, however, remains unclear as the documented appearance of genies in medieval literature from Iberia in Spanish is scarcely identified if at all. The genies' appearance in works emanating from Iberia in Arabic, like the work at hand directly, coincides with the presence and efflorescence of Muslim culture and knowledge, primarily pre-thirteenth century al-Andalus.<sup>28</sup> Jatifa exemplifies the definition of the *jinniya*, using her supernatural powers to transform into a beautiful gazelle for her first encounter with our hero Ziyad. In *Islam, Arabs, and the Intelligent World of the Jinn*, Amira el-Zein clarifies that, "They depicted *jinn* as taking animal shapes to hide from humans, or trick them, or deliver a message to them. They first thought that the jinn could dwell in deer because of their beauty and fragility."<sup>29</sup> The gazelle is symbolic not only as the embodiment of the genie and its connection to nature and the spiritual realm through its animal form, but it also reflects the feminine qualities symbolic of the gazelle popular in Arabic storytelling. While the genie is a long-established fantastical imaginary being appearing throughout the history of oral storytelling, the genie is also mentioned in the Qur'an, linking it both to pre-Islamic beliefs as well as Islamic religious and cultural development during the Middle Ages. El-Zein confirms that, "jinn are thought to be 'intermediary' or 'imaginal' beings above our terrestrial realm but below the celestial realm," and later she reiterates this intermediary role, not devils or angels, stating that, "Jinn are intellectual subtle beings. Their free will initiates their activities, so each jinni is responsible before God for his or her own deed."<sup>30</sup> These fantastical details are woven into the story from the beginning of the tale with Jatifa (in her gazelle form) and Ziyad. The use of the gazelle as Jatifa's animal representation follows pre-Islamic beliefs that deer were sacred and that genies commonly

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<sup>27</sup> *The Columbia Electronic Encyclopedia*, 6th ed. Copyright © 2012, Columbia University Press. <https://www.infoplease.com/encyclopedia/arts/classical-lit/myths-folklore/jinni> (last accessed on Jan. 4, 2020).

<sup>28</sup> Amira el-Zein, *Islam, Arabs, and the Intelligent World of the Jinn* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2009), 127.

<sup>29</sup> El-Zein, *Islam, Arabs, and the Intelligent World of the Jinn* (see note 28), 92.

<sup>30</sup> El-Zein, *Islam, Arabs, and the Intelligent World of the Jinn* (see note 28), X, XV.

dwelled within deer, linking back to stories of the goddess of al-‘Uzza who was reported to be surrounded by deer, her people.<sup>31</sup>

The moment Ziyad first spots Jatifa in her animal form reveals how much he is enchanted by her. The narrative adopts the popular interplay of hide and seek as our genie-gazelle pulls the protagonist farther from his hunting group and in an almost trance-like chase into a magical realm where Jatifa can finally reveal herself as a *jinniya*:

Permanecí en el alcázar de Al-Lualib tres meses y tres días, y habiendo salido uno a cazar y hacer presa de animales montaraces, en el momento en que me entretenía en la caza alcancé a ver una gacela, como no la ví más hermosa entre cuantas gacelas había visto ... qué a todo trance he de seguirla, aunque se ocultase donde se esconde el agua en las entrañas de la tierra, y aunque subiera a la alta esfera adonde el sol asciende.<sup>32</sup>

[I remained in the Alcazar (castle) of Al-lualib three months and three days, and having left to hunt and capture mountainous animals, in the moment I was enjoying the hunt I came across a gazelle, one that was more beautiful than all of the gazelles that I had seen ... in total trance I followed her, even if she were to hide where the water hides in the bowels of the earth, and even if she were to climb the highest spheres where the sun ascends.]

In other words, Ziyad would follow his beautiful gazelle to the end of the earth, and interesting enough Ziyad and Jatifa (in her gazelle form) do conclude their chase in a cave that holds within it a magical palace of genies. Noted for their “outlandish and stunning stories of the theme of love between jinn and humans” the *One Thousand and One Nights* stories popularized the game of shape-shifting in the process of developing the genie-human relationships. As seen in stories like “The Merchant and the Jinni,” the shapeshifting element serves sometimes to test the human’s character, as in this case where the genie appears as a woman in tattered clothes asking the fisherman to marry her, to which he obliges, and later she returns the favor by saving his life, although therefore having to reveal her true genie nature. In similar fashion the theme of shapeshifting that carries throughout *The Nights* narrative, in the *Tales of Ziyad Ibn ‘Amir al-Kinani*, once inside her magical cave Jatifa shifts from her gazelle form revealing her humanlike-genie form and confesses her love for the prince. Ziyad, understanding the power of *jinniya*, quickly decides that he must meet Jatifa’s desires and is soon convinced to marry her and initially agrees to remain in the magical castle of genies for three months, just as he had stayed with each one of his previous three wives a month each. As the tale pushes forward, the narrative develops an assorted description of Jatifa.

31 El-Zein, *Islam, Arabs, and the Intelligent World of the Jinn* (see note 28), 104.

32 Fernández y González, *Zeyyad ben Amir el de Quinena* (see note 4), 29.

As a gazelle, she is described as beautiful and enchanting. Once in her human-genie form Jatifa is characterized by her striking beauty and power that appears to cause a sense of fear in our protagonist hero. He describes her as, “una doncella, radiante como el sol del mediodía en cielo sin nubes (a maiden, radiant like the midday sun in the sky without clouds).”<sup>33</sup> Then, upon realizing that she is a genie he explains, “Contra un genio nada puede un hombre, menester es que estipulo con ella algún pacto ó compromiso, para que me permita volver á mi tierra” (A man cannot do anything against a genie, it is necessary to come to an agreement or commitment so that she will permit me to return to my lands).

It is here in this magical space of unlimited and undefined realities in the genie’s realm, it seems as if the tables are turned and that the fantastical power and enchantment of the female captivates as well as holds captive the hero protagonist.

An important detail that hints at the malleable position of the genie in Islamic thought is that before Jatifa introduces herself, she states, “Soy un genio bueno de los que creen en el Alcoran” (I am a good genie, one of those that believes in the Quran).<sup>34</sup> By introducing herself as a good genie, she eases the hero’s concerns. This act also situates the story itself within a continuing belief in good and bad genies. Moreover, by moving forward with Ziyad’s marriage to Jatifa the story simultaneously transgresses the societal norms that forbade marriage between jinn and humans and emphasizes the societal fascination with tales of love between jinn and humans.<sup>35</sup>

After Ziyad fulfills his promise and stays in the genie’s palace for three months, he requests his leave. Jatifa, to his surprise, announces that she is pregnant and wishes him to stay until she gives birth to their half-genie half human son. Once he is born she promises that she will leave the castle with her son and go with Ziyad wherever he wishes. After more than two years, Ziyad finally leaves to return to his other three wives and the palace of *Al-Laulib*.

Jatifa is a striking character for multiple reasons, but the one principle detail that distinguishes her from the other female protagonist wives is that she is the only female character of the story to bear a child. This transition from

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33 Fernández y González, *Zeyyad ben Amir el de Quinena* (see note 4), 29.

34 Fernández y González, *Zeyyad ben Amir el de Quinena* (see note 4), 30.

35 El-Zein, *Islam, Arabs, and the Intelligent World of the Jinn* (see note 28), 103. There are striking parallels to the hybrid creature Melusine in late medieval European literature, and to other fairy-like figures; see the contribution to this volume by Albrecht Classen. Shakespeare also operated happily with such mysterious female figures; see Classen’s Introduction to this volume.

gazelle to genie, and then to mother to a half genie half human child serves to highlight Jatifa's especially complex properties as she is the only female individual to go through such extreme transformations. In her most meek form, appearing physically in the patriarchal world of man, we see her as her spirit animal, a gazelle, traditionally presented as feminine and magical, fragile, yet intelligent and cunning. Once in the genies' cave and castle Jatifa dually embodies the ultimate sensuality and power.

It is this interplay between this invisible spiritual domain and the domain of man that I believe incites the continuous metamorphosis by Jatifa al-Horr, from the animal, to jinniya, from *jinniya* to woman/wife/mother, and finally from *jinniya*-mother to *jinniya*-warrior defender of humankind. The multilayered attempt to tie the character Jatifa al-Hoor to a hyper feminine and delicate gazelle imagery within the world of man is intriguing as the story concludes with her being again within the world of man, but contrastingly as a fierce vengeful guardian of humankind, as she seeks revenge burning a man to ash after he had beheaded Ziyad's fifth wife, Zaidat Ox-Xachan and kidnapped and threatened to kill Ziyad.

## Conclusion: Escaping the Power of Social Order

As I sum up I return to reflect upon elements beyond the female protagonists themselves and consider the question of how social frameworks, centric-patriarchal and peripheral spaces, order or lack thereof, contribute to shaping the protagonists' roles and extraordinary or fantastic characteristics. In his article *Nietzsche's Pendulum: Oscillations of Humankind*, Nigel Rapport reminds us that, "It is the human condition, according to Nietzsche, to oscillate, both cognitively and emotionally, between Apollo and Dionysus: to need and to cherish an appearance of order on the one hand, and to resort to and embrace the freedom and reality of the gratuitous on the other."<sup>36</sup> It is these considerations of Rapport together with those by Remke Kruk, Ana Ruth Vidal-Luengo, and Tarek Shamma that weigh heavily on my understanding of this narrative. Tarek Shamma, Kruk, and Mary Dockray-Miller and Melanie Magidow all comment on the role of women in medieval Arabic literature relative to socio-cultural landscape and

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<sup>36</sup> Nigel Rapport, "Nietzsche's Pendulum: Oscillations of Humankind," *Australian Journal of Anthropology* 16.2 (2005): 212–28; here 2.

time period.<sup>37</sup> The details brought to light by these scholars are related to power over the female identity, body, and/or mobility through space and time. However, I suggest that the social order and the power element in the *Tales of Ziyad ibn al-Kinani* are uniquely characterized through Nietzsche's pendulum concept. This concept of order and disorder, freedom and unfreedom, ties our narrative to the social constraints of that time period. The undertow of social expectations of our audience, pulling our protagonists back to realign the patriarchal social order is a principal force in this text as it reestablishes the extraordinary and fantastic protagonists of the narrative. That is, when there is an expressed patriarchal power over space it is reflected upon the female body. To an equal degree, however, when the space is undefined or fantastic, imaginary space, the constraints of male and female gender roles become more lenient. We see examples of undefined spaces through the genie's palace and the palace of *Al-Lualib*. Both magical palaces transgress the normative social landscape of a patriarchal court, giving rise to leading female characters as rulers of the palatial spaces. While such details cannot be one dimensional due to other factors like class status (that restricts or permits additional access to male spaces) and even age, the spatial landscape indeed plays an essential role in storytellers' creativity in shaping the characteristics and descriptions of the protagonists. Mary Dockray-Miller and Melanie Magidow address this complex network of social power in their article "Epic of the Commander Dhat Al-Himma," remarking that "The female identity may be hidden or disguised, or may be overridden by other marks of social power. This complexity of power and social relations reflects the historical reality of the storytellers and their audience."<sup>38</sup> It is in this same vein that Tarek Shamma avers that "the *Arabian Nights* portrays a masculine imagining of female sexuality in which patriarchal anxieties of women's sexual empowerment are enacted only to be subsequently relieved."<sup>39</sup> Remke Kruk reiterates a similar notion in her most recent publication, *Warrior Women of Islam*, where she observes that "martial women do not represent the female angle in male discourse, but embody the perceptions, anxieties and desires of

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37 Mary Dockray-Miller and Melanie Magidow, "Epic of the Commander Dhat Al-Himma," *Medieval Feminist Forum*, 54.3 (2019): 1–62; here 17; Tarek Shamma, "Women and Slaves: Gender Politics in the *Arabian Nights*," *Movels & Tales*, 31.2 (2017): 239–60; here 240; Remke Kruk, *The Warrior Women of Islam: Female Empowerment in Arabic Popular Literature* (London and New York: I. B. Tauris, 2014), 225.

38 Mary Dockray-Miller and Melanie Magidow, "Epic of the Commander Dhat Al-Himma," *Medieval Feminist Forum*, 54.3 (2019): 1–62; here 17.

39 Tarek Shamma, "Women and Slaves: Gender Politics in the *Arabian Nights*," *Movels & Tales*, 31.2 (2017): 239–60; here 240.

men.”<sup>40</sup> For most of the female protagonists in the *Tales of Ziyad Ibn ‘Amir al-Kinani* a similar relief presents itself in the form of marriage to the main character Ziyad. Marriage itself is a significant marker as a return to patriarchal order. It is this order that gives and takes empowerment of the female protagonists like Sade and Al-Chahia while simultaneously excluding the shapeshifting *jinniya* Jatifa al-Horr who does not fit within any social framework. Although the female characters from the *Tales of Ziyad Ibn ‘Amir al-Kinani* narrative are diverse, the tendency is that these women are momentarily empowered by their transformative nature.

It is not that they necessarily assume masculine characteristics to become powerful, but rather that their power and as such often their extraordinary descriptions are born in their ability to play such diverse roles. The power of the female characters in *Tales of Ziyad Ibn ‘Amir al-Kinani* lies in their agency to transform, transgress, and embody multiple spatial roles defined by their historical moment. As reaffirmed by many scholars, the female role and her embodied power are often interpreted through a literary lens that portrays the female as dichotic, an exaggeration of reality: the apogee/pinnacle of all things, the paramount of sensuality, the unsurpassable beauty. The one female that breaks the mold in all cases and is extraordinary in all senses, is Jatifa al-Hor, since as a *jinniya* she is not bound by social or spatial frameworks. She is the ultimate expression of fantasy and power as a magical genie, and her transgressions of the social norms are overlooked and permissible as the non-human spirit of fire and air.

Even as a good Muslim genie, she trespasses prohibitions through her marriage with a human, Ziyad. Not only does she control the male hero Ziyad vis-à-vis her renowned power and extraordinary sensual beauty, but she also convinces him to stay in the magical palace of genies throughout her pregnancy and birth of their half-genie half human son, and beyond. Instead of the patriarch taming and subduing her female agency, mobility, and ordering of the female body, it is Jatifa al-Horr who represents the intermediary spirit, good or bad, but ultimately feminine, that subdues the patriarch. Her extraordinary power lies in her ability to transform, as a female, squeezing into many roles, representing a complex multiplicity that is the female gender itself. However, she avoids the undertow of the patriarchal order because she exists in the peripheral as a fantastic being, even in her human form.

Although this paper is yet a very preliminary investigation of the *Tales of Ziyad Ibn ‘Amir al-Kinani*, the marked role of fantasy and the representation of

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<sup>40</sup> Remke Kruk, *The Warrior Women of Islam: Female Empowerment in Arabic Popular Literature* (London and New York: I. B. Tauris, 2014), 225.



power interplay between space and gender roles emphasize the extent to which critical analysis still has be done on the topic working with these mostly untouched and untranslated manuscripts in which we can discover remarkable literary documents mirroring early medieval Arabic expressions of imagination and dream projections.



Albrecht Classen

# The World of Hybrid Women in Medieval and Early Modern German Literature: Fantasy Images, Fascination, and Terror

Fairies, Mermaids, Undines, Flower Girls, and Nixies as Reflections of Popular Subconsciousness

## Fantasy and Imagination in the Middle Ages

Irrespective of the cultural and historical background, people have always been intrigued or horrified by their own imagination or fantasy, and what they have been told by others about the ‘other world.’ There is not only a world of physical facts, but also a world of make-belief that can tell us much about individual or collective subconsciousness. It might be rather difficult, if not impossible, to pursue the history of psychology of previous cultures, but both literary documents and art works can still tell us much about individual or collective imagination, which might have had a greater impact on people’s lives than the actual, material conditions. This applies to our own time as well. Even though we live in a very concrete material universe, much of our existence is actually determined by esoteric concepts, dreams, ideas, and images that are connected with reality only insofar as we can recognize them intellectually or rationally, without being fully capable of understanding or explaining them. Superstition and faith fall into the same categories. Fear of the hellish afterlife, of the living dead, of revenants, ghosts, spirits, demons, and many other creatures has always been a significant factor throughout time.<sup>1</sup> Similarly, hopes, dreams, and ideals

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<sup>1</sup> Peter Dinzelbacher, *Angst im Mittelalter: Teufels-, Todes- und Gottese Erfahrung: Mentalitätsgeschichte und Ikonographie* (Paderborn, Munich, et al.: Ferdinand Schöningh, 1996), and Nancy Caciola, *Discerning Spirits: Divine and Demonic Possession in the Middle Ages*. Conjunctions of Religion & Power in the Medieval Past (Ithaca, NY, and London: Cornell University Press, 2003); as to the large area of ghosts, demons, revenants, vampires, and other beings, see Romedio Schmitz-Esser, *Der Leichnam im Mittelalter: Einbalsamierung, Verbrennung und die kulturelle Konstruktion des toten Körpers*. *Mittelalter-Forschungen*, 48. 2nd ed. (2014; Ostfildern: Jan Thorbecke, 2016), ch. VII, 431–71; Nancy Mandeville Caciola, *Afterlives:*

of alternative worlds or of a future existence deeply mirror the other dimension of human mentality, and who could firmly and conclusively determine the difference between fact and fiction, imagination and reality?

Even if we assume that we live today, as Max Weber (1864–1920) had famously argued, in a world of disenchantment at least since the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, the belief in otherworldly beings and their influence on us in this life continues to hold sway both in the West and in the East, and this long after the movement of Romanticism or irrespective of its influence on us today.<sup>2</sup> The entire genre of fairy tales, today mostly identified as reading

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*The Return of the Dead in the Middle Ages* (Ithaca, NY, and London: Cornell University Press, 2016). See also Aline G. Hornaday, “Visitors from Another Space: The Medieval Revenant as Foreigner,” *Meeting the Foreign in the Middle Ages*, ed. Albrecht Classen (New York and London: Routledge, 2002), 71–95. She lists much of the relevant research literature on the notion of the living dead in the Middle Ages. See now the contribution to this volume by Emmy Herland dealing with the notion of a ghostly shadow in Lope de Vega’s *El Caballero de Olmedo* (1632). There are intriguing parallels to Romantic (German) literature, such as Adelbert von Chamisso’s *Peter Schlemihl* (1814). Each time, if we accept a psychological reading influenced by C. G. Jung, for instance, we encounter a powerful fictional treatment of the conflicted subconsciousness, the *id*. For medieval perspectives, see now the contributions to *Schatten: Spielarten eines Phänomens in der mittelalterlichen Literatur*, ed. Björn Reich, Christoph Schanze, and Hartmut Bleumer. *Zeitschrift für Literaturwissenschaft und Linguistik*, 180 (Stuttgart: J. B. Metzler, 2015). For examples in early modern literature, see Homer Berndt, *Semantik der Verdunkelung: die Ambivalenzen des “Schatten”-Motivs und ihre Tradition in der Literatur der frühen Moderne*. *Epistemata. Reihe Literaturwissenschaft*, 856 (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2016).

2 Egil Asprem, *The Problem of Disenchantment: Scientific Naturalism and Esoteric Discourse, 1900–1989*. *Studies in the History of Religions*, 147 (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2014); Allison P. Coudert, “Rethinking Max Weber’s Theory of Disenchantment,” *Magic and Magicians in the Middle Ages and the Early Modern Time: The Occult in Pre-Modern Sciences, Medicine, Literature, Religion, and Astrology*, ed. Albrecht Classen. *Fundamentals of Medieval and Early Modern Culture*, 20 (Berlin and Boston: Walter de Gruyter, 2017), 705–39; Liam Gearon, “The Educational Sociology and Political Theology of Disenchantment: From the Secularization to the Securitization of the Sacred,” *Religions* 10 (2019): 1–14. He argues (in his abstract) “that all these framings are a matter of decision-making in the exercise of ideological, political and theological power in and through education. Such decision-making in educational policy presents new sociological and political-theological territory for empirical and theoretical analysis of the shifting sources of authority amongst ... ‘the power elite’.” <https://www.mdpi.com/2077-1444/10/1/12/htm> (last accessed on Feb. 15, 2020). This topic proves to be of great significance for modern and post-modern culture; see Jason A. Josephson-Storm, *The Myth of Disenchantment: Magic, Modernity, and the Birth of the Human Sciences* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2017); Jonathan Sheehan, “When Was Disenchantment? History and the Secular Age,” *Varieties of Secularism in a Secular Age*, ed. Michael Warner, Jonathan Van Antwerpen, and Craig Calhoun (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010), 217–42; Michael

material only for children, clearly confirms, especially considering its long history and universal relevance for every age group, the major significance of fantasy and imagination in human culture. Similarly, the modern movie industry and now the internet thrive strongly on the desire of the audience to be entertained by dream images and narratives. Escapism, desire for excitement, and the search for ideals, if not horrors, are the names of the game providing access to human subconsciousness.

The critical examination of the history of mentality has done much in recent years to uncover that intangible dimension and has demonstrated the extensive impact of that dream world on our daily lives, both in the past and in the present.<sup>3</sup> The role which religion plays in all culture is virtually unfathomable and would not need to be documented here at length. However, the art of magic, mostly hidden in the background of most cultures, has always mattered more deeply than we might commonly assume.<sup>4</sup> In fact, we can recognize here a significant competition between two discourses, both claiming central importance, with the Christian religion normally having gained the upper hand because of its organizational structure operating in public, whereas magic has more typically been highly individualistic, secret, and private.<sup>5</sup> Narratives of and about magic, including the huge domain of magical charms, reflect a mysterious desire to transcend the limitations of nature and to gain esoteric powers

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Saler, *As If: Modern Enchantment and the Literary Prehistory of Virtual History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), Jane Bennett, *The Enchantment of Modern Life: Attachments, Crossings, and Ethics* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001); see also the contributions to *The Re-Enchantment of the World: Secular Magic in a Rational Age*, ed. Joshua Landy and Michael Saler (Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 2009).

3 *Europäische Mentalitätsgeschichte: Hauptthemen in Einzeldarstellungen*, ed. Peter Dinzelbacher. 2nd rev. ed. (1993; Stuttgart: Alfred Kröner, 2008); Nancy Caciola, *Discerning Spirits: Divine and Demonic Possession in the Middle Ages*. Conjunctions of Religion & Power in the Medieval Past (Ithaca, NY, and London: Cornell University Press, 2003).

4 *Magic and Magicians in the Middle Ages and the Early Modern Time: The Occult in Pre-Modern Sciences, Medicine, Literature, Religion, and Astrology*, ed. Albrecht Classen. Fundamentals of Medieval and Early Modern Culture, 20 (Berlin and Boston: Walter de Gruyter, 2017).

5 Michael Bailey, *Battling Demons: Witchcraft, Heresy, and Reform in the Late Middle Ages* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2003); id., *Magic and Superstition in Europe: A Concise History from Antiquity to the Present*. Critical Issues in History (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Pub., 2007); id., *Magic and Witchcraft: Critical Concepts in Historical Studies* (London and New York: Routledge, 2014); id., *Magic: The Basics* (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2018).

when human abilities simply fail, as reflected, for instance, by the enduring tradition of the Faust/us (Theophilus) figure from the tenth through the nineteenth centuries and beyond.<sup>6</sup>

Recent research has emphasized the enormous impact of miracle narratives on medieval and early modern society, thriving both on extensive religious teachings and a vast treasure trove of popular imagination.<sup>7</sup> But we also ought

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<sup>6</sup> Beatrix Koll, "Theophilus," *Verführer, Schurken, Magier*, ed. Ulrich Müller and Werner Wunderlich. *Mittelalter Mythen*, 3 (St. Gall: UVK – Fachverlag für Wissenschaft und Studium, 2001), 915–26; For the Faustus figure, see Klaus M. Schmidt, "Faust: Mittelalterliche Legende – moderner Mythos?," *Künstler, Dichter, Gelehrte*, ed. Ulrich Müller and Werner Wunderlich. *Mittelalter Mythen*, 4 (St. Gall: UVK – Fachverlag für Wissenschaft und Studium, 2005), 749–90; cf. also the contributions to *The Faustian Century: German Literature in the Age of Luther and Faustus*, ed. J. M. van der Laan and Andrew Weeks (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2013); For the history of research, particularly focusing on the *Historia*, see Albrecht Classen, *The German Volksbuch. A Critical History of a Late-Medieval Genre*. *Studies in German Language and Literature*, 15 (Lewiston, NY, Queenston, and Lampeter: Edwin Mellen Press, 1995, reissued 1999), 213–43;

Daniel E. O'Sullivan, "Miracle Narratives," *Handbook of Medieval Studies: Terms – Methods – Trends*, ed. Albrecht Classen, Vol. 3 (Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2010), 1911–13; here 1911. He offers an excellent survey of the relevant research literature. See also Martin Heinzelmänn and Klaus Herberts, "Zur Einführung," *Mirakel im Mittelalter: Konzeptionen, Erscheinungsformen, Deutungen*, ed. id. and Dieter R. Bauer. *Beiträge zur Hagiographie*, 3 (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2002), 9–21. See now Karen A. Winstead, *Virgin Martyrs: Legends of Sainthood in Late Medieval England* (1997; Ithaca, NY, and London: Cornell University Press, 2018); cf. also Benedicta Ward, *Miracles and the Medieval Mind: Theory, Record and Event 1000–1215*, rev. ed. (1982; Aldershot: Scolar, 1987); Lorraine Daston, "Marvelous Facts and Miraculous Evidence in Early Modern Europe," *Critical Inquiry* 18.1 (1991): 93–124; *Things That Talk: Object Lessons from Art and Science*, ed. Lorraine Daston (New York: Zone Books, 2004); Michael E. Goodich, *Miracles and Wonders: The Development of the Concept of Miracle, 1150–1350* (Aldershot, England: Ashgate, 2007); Caroline Bynum, "Medieval Miracles as Evidence," *What Reason Promises: Essays on Reason, Nature and History*, ed. Wendy Doniger, Peter Galison, and Susan Neiman (Berlin and Boston: Walter de Gruyter, 2016), 55–61. See now also Claire M. Waters, "What's the Use? Marian Miracles and the Workings of the Literary," *The Medieval Literary Beyond Form*, ed. Robert J. Meyer-Lee and Catherine Sanok (Woodbridge, Suffolk: D. S. Brewer, 2018), 15–34; the other contributors expand on this discussion in other areas of medieval culture and textuality.

<sup>7</sup> A. Michel, "Miracles," *Dictionnaire de théologie catholique*, vol. 10 (Paris: Letouzey et Ané, 1928), cols. 1798–1859; Caroline Walker Bynum, *Metamorphosis and Identity* (New York: Zone Books, 2001), 37–75 and 88–92; for a historically wide-ranging and critical study of this phenomenon, see Ernst and Marie-Luise Keller, *Der Streit um die Wunder: Kritik und Auslegung des Übernatürlichen in der Neuzeit* (Gütersloh: Gerd Mohn, 1968); cf. also *The Cambridge Companion to Miracles*, ed. Graham H. Twelftree (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011); for an insightful eighteenth-century position, see Philohistoricus, *The history of miracles: Being a faithful and particular account of all the wonderful and miraculous events that have been perform'd by the great omnipotent of heaven and parth, the prince of the infernal world, or his agents, on the present*

to consider the considerable interest in and fascination with superstition, as we would call it today, pertaining to ghosts, fairies, nixies, dwarfs, dragons, basilisks, and many other creatures at the margin of human society, maybe simply imaginary, but certainly very alive and relevant in medieval and early modern culture at large for those who enjoyed experimenting with alternative realities. The perennial myth of the Amazons is still with us and exerts its influence on popular culture. The perennial myth of the Amazons is still with us and exerts its influence on popular culture.<sup>8</sup> It remains a matter of debate until today what the true difference might be between superstition and true faith, if such a difference can even ever be maintained fully.<sup>9</sup> To be sure, the more we engage with this issue, the less tangible it becomes because no one can really define completely what 'truth' would be, especially in matters of faith.

We could also refine our examination here by highlighting the surprisingly intimate interlocking of the intellectual with the popular culture, or the interlacing of the learned with the folkloric, of both the pagan and the Christian

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stage of action, for near six thousand years, so far as the sacred writings, or prophane history informs us. *The whole digested in the most regular and accurate method* (London: Printed for J. Fuller, at the Bible in Butcher-hall-Lane, 1751). For the faith in miracles today, see, for instance, Peter-Matthias Gaede, *Der Glaube an Wunder* (Hamburg: Gruner + Jahr, 2013). There are many rather questionable publications on this topic; see, for instance, Henry Libersat, *Miracles Today: True Stories of Contemporary Healings* (Ann Arbor, MI: Charis, 1999). The experiences of a neurosurgeon regarding faith and miraculous healing are now captured very seriously and scientifically by Allan J. Hamilton, *The Scalpel and the Soul: Encounters with Surgery, the Supernatural, and the Healing Power of Hope* (New York: Jeremy P. Tarcher/Putnam, 2008). See also *Les Miracles, miroirs des corps*, ed. Jacques Gélis and Odile Redon (Paris: Presses et Publications de l'Université de Paris-VIII, 1983); Caroline Walker Bynum, *Wonderful Blood: Theology and Practice in Late Medieval Northern Germany and Beyond* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007); William Christian, Jr., *Apparitions in Late Medieval and Renaissance Spain* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1981); Karin Fuchs, *Zeichen und Wunder bei Guibert de Nogent: Kommunikation, Deutungen und Funktionalisierungen von Wundererzählungen im 12. Jahrhundert*. Pariser historische Studien, 84 (Munich: Oldenbourg, 2008). See further the contributions to *Aspetti del meraviglioso nelle letterature medievali: medio-evo latino, romanzo, germanico e celtico = Aspects du merveilleux dans les littératures médiévales*, ed. Franca Ela Consolino, Francesco Marzella, and Lucilla Spetia. Culture et société médiévales, 1780–2881, 29 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2016). The literature on this topic is legion.

**8** See the contribution to this volume by Isidro Luis Jiménez, who focuses on the Amazons in medieval and early modern Spanish literature.

**9** Dieter Harmening, *Superstitio: Überlieferungs- und theoriegeschichtliche Untersuchungen zur kirchlich-theologiegeschichtlichen Aberglaubensliteratur des Mittelalters* (Berlin: Erich Schmidt, 1979); Michael D. Bailey, *Fearful Spirits, Reasoned Follies: The Boundaries of Superstition in Late Medieval Europe* (Ithaca, NY, and London: Cornell University Press, 2013). As to the belief in charms, see now the contribution to this volume by Chiara Benati.

dimension. The Church was not as powerful and influential as we commonly assume, otherwise it would not have felt this strong need to fight throughout the centuries against alleged heretics, witches, pagans, heathens, deviants of many different kinds, to name just some groups.<sup>10</sup> Jacques Le Goff calls this phenomenon the “régression culturelle,”<sup>11</sup> and in another context he highlights the fundamental insecurity determining all of the Middle Ages: “It was a fundamental insecurity which boiled down to a fear of the life to come.”<sup>12</sup> Peter Dinzelbacher has repeatedly alerted us to the enormous importance of the belief in the afterworld (hell, purgatory, paradise), which has had a huge impact on society throughout times and across religions, and Alan E. Bernstein recently confirmed this observation once again.<sup>13</sup> Pervasive and often devastating forms of anti-Judaism, for instance, followed by cruel and murderous pogroms, reflect this deep set of insecurities and lack of identity.<sup>14</sup>

This allegedly binary opposition between the ‘real’ and the ‘unreal’ as the ultimate paradigm determining the entire pre-modern world seems a bit extreme and cannot fully explain all aspects of medieval culture, especially because the pagan (Celtic) world continued to prevail or at least to exist parallel to the Christian faith community, and because people never stopped pursuing their own imaginations and fantasies, both determined by positive and negative values. Similarly, the belief in ghosts, elves, giants, dwarfs, werewolves, monsters, sirens, undines, mermaids, and many others never simply died out with the end of the Middle Ages and continues to occupy also modern fantasies.<sup>15</sup> Fairies and mermaids, above all, have proven their enormous staying power in people’s fantasies throughout the ages, despite the fact that they are nowadays

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**10** Michael D. Barbezat, *Burning Bodies: Communities, Eschatology, and the Punishment of Heresy in the Middle Ages* (Ithaca, NY, and London: Cornell University Press, 2018).

**11** Jacques Le Goff, *Pour un autre Moyen Age: Temps, travail et culture en Occident: 18 essais*. Bibliothèque des Histoires (Paris: Gallimard, 1977), 227.

**12** Jacques Le Goff, *Medieval Civilization 400–1500*, trans. Julia Barrow (1988; Oxford and New York: Basil Blackwell, 1989), 325.

**13** Peter Dinzelbacher, *Die letzten Dinge: Himmel, Hölle, Fegefeuer im Mittelalter* (Freiburg i. Br.: Herder, 1999); id., *Von der Welt durch die Hölle zum Paradies: Das mittelalterliche Jenseits* (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 2007). See also Alan E. Bernstein, *Hell and Its Rivals: Death and Retribution among Christians, Jews, and Muslims in the Early Middle Ages* (Ithaca, NY, and London: Cornell University Press, 2017).

**14** See the contribution to this volume by Birgit Wiedl. This topic has already been discussed from many different perspectives and does not need to be pursued here at length. But we need to keep in mind the huge factor of ‘fear’ determining much of human imagination and fantasy.

**15** Peter Dinzelbacher, *Lebenswelten des Mittelalters 1000–1500*. Bachmanns Basiswissen, 1 (Badenweiler: Wissenschaftlicher Verlag Bachmann, 2010), 425–28. See the contribution to this volume by Martha Moffitt Peacock.



mostly limited to the imaginative world of children, even when mermaids, such as the one of Edam, Holland, has served over the centuries as a figure of national identity.<sup>16</sup>

Even the strongest force fighting against this kind of alternative belief (calling it 'superstition,' for instance), the Church itself, was not obtuse to incorporating traces of these ancient concepts into its architecture, sculptural programs (gargoyles, capitals),<sup>17</sup> paintings, and manuscript illuminations (apocalypse; marginal drawings, *drôleries*) in order to instrumentalize them for its own purposes.<sup>18</sup> In short, we would not do justice to medieval and pre-modern culture at large if we ignored the vast dimension of fantasy, imagination, myths, dreams, and spirituality ever present in art works, literary texts, chronicle accounts, miracle reports, and other documents.<sup>19</sup> The margin was actually just as important as the center, as Michael Camille has already confirmed regarding the evidence of manuscript illuminations populated by a vast host of fanciful figures, objects, creatures, and plants.<sup>20</sup>

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**16** Laurence Harf-Lancner, *Les fées au Moyen Âge: Morgane et Mélusine; la naissance des fées*. Nouvelle bibliothèque du Moyen Âge, 8 (Paris: Champion, 1984); *Die Welt der Feen im Mittelalter: II. Tagung auf dem Mont Saint-Michel*. Wodan, 32 (Greifswald: Reineke-Verlag, 1994); *Das Wunderbare in der arthurischen Literatur: Probleme und Perspektiven*, ed. Friedrich Wolfzettel. Schriften der Internationalen Artusgesellschaft, 5 (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer, 2003). See also the contributions to *Monsters and Borders in the Early Modern Imagination*, ed. Jana Byars and Hans Peter Broedel (New York and London: Routledge, 2018). See also online, [https://www.beleven.org/verhaal/de\\_zemeermin\\_van\\_edam](https://www.beleven.org/verhaal/de_zemeermin_van_edam) (last accessed on Feb. 15, 2020); Clarie Knispel-van 't Hof, *Het ongetemde zeewijf*, uitg. 2nd ed. (Artimare: Edam, 2008).

**17** Albrecht Classen, "Gargoyles – Wasserspeier," *Dämonen, Monster, Fabelwesen*, ed. Ulrich Müller and Werner Wunderlich. Mittelalter Mythen, 2 (St. Gall: UVK – Fachverlag für Wissenschaft und Studium, 1999), 127–33; see also Anthony Weir and James Jerman, *Images of Lust: Sexual Carvings on Medieval Churches*. Rpt. (1986; London and New York: Routledge, 1999); Thomas A. Fudge, *Medieval Religion and Its Anxieties: History and Mystery in the Other Middle Ages*. The New Middle Ages (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016).

**18** For countless illustrations, see, for instance, *Das leuchtende Mittelalter*, ed. Jacques Dalarun, trans. Birgit Lamerz-Beckschäfer. 3rd ed. (2002; Darmstadt: Primus Verlag, 2011).

**19** See the contributions to *The Pagan Middle Ages*, ed. Ludo J. R. Milis. Trans. into English by Tanis Guest (1991; Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 1998); R. I. Moore, *The Birth of Popular Heresy*. Medieval Academy Reprints for Teaching, 33 (Toronto, Buffalo, and London: University of Toronto Press, 1995).

**20** Michael Camille, *Image on the Edge: The Margins of Medieval Art* (London: Reaktion Books, 1992).

## Thematic Outline

To probe this issue further, the focus of this paper will rest on the appearance of fantastic female characters in a variety of Middle High German narratives, beginning with the *Nibelungenlied*, then turning to the slightly earlier *Alexander* by Priest Lambrecht, whereupon I will discuss two major 'ghost' stories, each involving fanciful female figures, first in the verse narrative *Peter von Staufenberg*, then in Thüring von Ringoltingen's novel *Melusine*. Here we face the extraordinary opportunity to gain insight into some elements of medieval subconsciousness, as difficult as it normally seems to be to apply a psychological lens to medieval documents.<sup>21</sup>

Fairies, mermaids, sirens, elves, and other strange female creatures, as they appear in all of these texts, belong to archetypal figures who intervene in human lives, mostly as helpers, but often also as uncanny individuals who originate from a disturbing, maybe chaotic origin, and who regularly have to return to that world again because of the male protagonist's transgression or because they are not permitted to stay in human society for a variety of mostly mysterious reasons.<sup>22</sup> The vast genre of modern-day fairy tales speaks volumes about this phenomenon, which is now even replicated by the world of movies, video games, internet platforms, and related media drawing from the very same sources and thriving for the very same reasons as in previous centuries.<sup>23</sup> As little as we can pinpoint this phenomenon in rational and categorical terms, as

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**21** For some attempts to pursue psycho-historical research, see the contributions to *Psychologie in der Mediävistik: Gesammelte Beiträge des Teinheimer Symposions*, ed. Jürgen Kühnel, Hans-Dieter Mück, Ursula Müller, and Ulrich Müller. Göppinger Arbeiten zur Germanistik, 431 (Göppingen: Kümmerle, 1985); see now Peter Dinzelbacher, *Structures and Origins of the Twelfth-Century 'Renaissance'*. Monographien zur Geschichte des Mittelalters, 63 (Stuttgart: Anton Hiersemann, 2017), 130–34.

**22** Laurence Harf-Lancner, *Les fées au moyen âge. Morgane et Mélusine. La naissance des fées* (Geneva and Paris 1984); Friedrich Wolfzettel, "Fee, Feenland," *Enzyklopädie des Märchens*, ed. Rolf Brednich. Vol. IV (Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1984), 945–64; Christoph Huber, "Mythisches erzählen: Narration und Rationalisierung im Schema der 'gestörten Mahrteenehe' (besonders im Ritter von Staufenberg und bei Walter Map)," *Präsenz des Mythos. Konfigurationen einer Denkform in Mittelalter und Früher Neuzeit*, ed. Udo Friedrich and Bruno Quast (Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2003), 247–75; Armin Schulz, "Spaltungsphantasmen. Erzählen von der 'gestörten Mahrteenehe'," *Erzähltechnik und Erzählstrategien in der deutschen Literatur des Mittelalters*. Saarbrücker Kolloquium 2002, ed. Wolfgang Haubrichs. Wolfram-Studien, 18 (Berlin: Erich Schmidt, 2004), 233–62. For Old English examples, see the contribution to this volume by Warren Tormey.

**23** The literature on this topic is legion; see, for instance, Cristina Bacchilega, *Fairy Tales Transformed?: Twenty-First-Century Adaptations and the Politics of Wonder*. Series in Fairy-Tale Studies (Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press, 2013); *Märchen im Medienwechsel: zur*

significant it proves to be in popular, at times also sophisticated culture, especially if we think of Arthurian literature certainly populated by mysterious figures such as Merlin and Morgan le Fay, but then also by dwarfs (Meliur in Gottfried von Straßburg's *Tristan*) or malicious creatures coming from the outside (Elisabeth von Nassau-Saarbrücken, *Königin Sibille*).<sup>24</sup>

Literary texts serve intriguingly well for an investigation of the medieval subconsciousness because here we encounter many times the confrontation with another world, maybe of imagination, but certainly of human projection of otherness.<sup>25</sup> As Leslie Ellen Jones confirms, "Fairies are believed to inhabit liminal zones: in the wilderness they are encountered in the parts of the forest where people go to pick berries or gather firewood; in the domestic realm they live in barns and outbuildings or enter the house at night when humans sleep."<sup>26</sup> Fairies are neither entirely evil nor entirely good; instead, they occupy a liminal space and underscore through their presence in fictional texts and in visual documents the extensive 'reality' of imagination in the pre-modern world. To note, however, I will not distinguish here clearly between fairies or magical women, sirens and mermaids since they are all closely related to each other, they all occupy a transgressive and uncanny border land and invite their male, i.e., human, partners to join them or to live with them in marriage.

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*Geschichte und Gegenwart des Märchenfilms*, ed. Ute Dettmar, Claudia Maria Pecher, and Ron Schlesinger, together with Martin Anker (Stuttgart: J. B. Metzler Verlag, 2017).

**24** Vladimir Acosta, *La humanidad prodigiosa: el imaginario antropológico medieval*. 2 vols. (Caracas, Venezuela: Monte Avila Editores Latinoamericana: Consejo de Desarrollo Científico y Humanístico, Universidad Central de Venezuela, 1996); Isabel Habicht, *Der Zwerg als Träger metafictionaler Diskurse in deutschen und französischen Texten des Mittelalters*. Germanisch-Romanische Monatsschrift – Beiheft, 38 (Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag, 2010); Susanne Dinkl, *Untote, Riesen, Zwerge und Elfen: zur Konstruktion populären (Aber)Glaubens seit dem frühen Mittelalter*. Kulturtransfer, 9 (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2017).

**25** Albrecht Classen, "The Other' in Medieval Narratives and Epics. The Encounter with Monsters, Devils, Giants, and other Creatures," *Canon and Canon Transgression in Medieval German Literature*, ed. Albrecht Classen. Göppinger Arbeiten zur Germanistik, 573 (Göppingen: Kümmerle, 1993), 83–121; id., "The Monster Outside and Within: Medieval Literary Reflections on Ethical Epistemology. From *Beowulf* to Marie de France, the *Nibelungenlied*, and Thuring von Ringoltingen's *Melusine*," *Neohelicon* 40.2 (2013): 521–42.

**26** Leslie Ellen Jones, "Fairies," *Medieval Folklore: An Encyclopedia of Myths, Legends, Tales, Beliefs, and Customs*. Vol. 1: A–K, ed. Carl Lindahl, John McNamara, and John Lindow (Santa Barbara, CA, Denver, CO, and London: ABC-CLIO, 2000), 298–303; here 299. See also Jean N. Goodrich, "Fairy, Elves and the Enchanted Otherworld," *Handbook of Medieval Culture: Fundamental Aspects and Conditions of the European Middle Ages*, ed. Albrecht Classen. Vol. 1 (Berlin and Boston: Walter de Gruyter, 2015), 431–64. The German tradition, however, is hardly touched upon by Jones or Goodrich.

According to some traditions, fairies live in their own communities and interact with people only occasionally (Irish), while according to others, they share living spaces with human beings (Continental). At any rate, however, fairies have always been believed to have a deep impact on human beings, especially through their prophetic powers and at times their maternal or erotic functions. We regularly hear that fairies possess large treasures, can exert much powers, and are experts in textile and other art, sometimes joining men in sexual pleasures, sometimes assisting women during child delivery. Whenever fairies appear on the narrative stage, they provide insight into a mysterious origin; the land of the fairies, or *Avalon*, is basically a form of utopia *avant la lettre*; and they seem to be, as Friedrich Wolfzettel comments, the result of a synthesis of late antique Roman and early medieval northern European cultural mythologies.<sup>27</sup> However, it seems more productive to recognize in their projections a literary attempt to give expression to deeply hidden desires and fears.

There are countless erotic relationships between fairies and male members of courtly society (*Martenehe*), who have to observe closely the danger of breaking taboos imposed on them by their fairy partners. Fairies prove to be highly attractive and lure men toward them, but the sexual union with them can also bring about devastation and death, depending on the circumstances, whether the fairies impose the taboos on their human partners or whether they are bound by taboos themselves. In whatever way we approach the world of fairies and related female figures, they always represent a type of cultural, mental-historical, sexual, and religious syncretism. They can be a major lure for the male protagonist prodding him to depart from this deplorable world and to enter *Avalon* (Marie de France, “*Lanval*”),<sup>28</sup> or they can be intriguing, fascinating, but also dangerous

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<sup>27</sup> Friedrich Wolfzettel, “Fee, Feenland,” *Enzyklopädie des Märchens*, ed. Kurt Ranke. Vol. 4 (Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1984), 945–64; see now also *Airy Nothings: Imagining the Otherworld of Faerie from the Middle Ages to the Age of Reason: Essays in Honour of Alasdair A. MacDonald*, ed. Karin E. Olsen, Jan R. Veenstra, and Alasdair A. MacDonald. Brill’s Studies in Intellectual History, 22 (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2014); *Fairies, Demons, and Nature Spirits ‘Small Gods’ at the Margins of Christendom*, ed. Michael Ostling. Palgrave Historical Studies in Witchcraft and Magic (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018).

<sup>28</sup> *The Lais of Marie de France: Text and Translation*, ed. and trans. by Claire M. Waters (Peterborough, Ont.: Broadview Editions, 2018). See now the very useful interdisciplinary analysis by Fritz Peter Knapp, *Blüte der europäischen Literatur des Hochmittelalters*. Part 2: *Roman – Kleinelik – Lehrdichtung* (Stuttgart: S. Hirzel, 2019), 233–42. He emphasizes, in particular, “Bei Marie de France dienen diese außerirdischen Liebespartner/-innen als poetische Chiffren für menschliche Liebesängste und Liebessehnsüchte” (234; In the case of Marie de France, those non-human partners in love serve as poetic figures representing human fear about love and desire for love).

and threatening beings, such as the Lorelei (popular German fantasy)<sup>29</sup> or Morgan le Fay (*Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*).<sup>30</sup>

## Fairies in the *Nibelungenlied*

We need to distinguish, first, between the ordinary projection of most courtly narratives and heroic epics on the one hand, and additionally fictional features within those narrative frameworks. This fabulous dimension emerges numerous times in various contexts, and then disappears from view again. In most cases, medieval poets deliberately and meticulously engaged with the uncanny as manifested through the emergence of dwarfs and giants on the literary stage, but we also observe the appearance of mysterious female figures, such as in the anonymous heroic epic *Nibelungenlied* (ca. 1200). Most of this monumental poem focuses on the superior characters, Siegfried, Hagen, Gunther, and Ruedeger, who all ultimately succumb to their death as a consequence of hatred and the desire for revenge. However, at one point, which seems to serve as a critical fulcrum for the transition from the first to the second part, Hagen encounters a group of nixies, whom he tries to use for his own purposes, taking away their clothes so that he can force them to foretell his future and that of the Burgundian army under his command. One of the nixies at first lies to him, until the second one reveals what is really awaiting them in the future; their doom.<sup>31</sup> The entire episode, as

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**29** Helga Arend, "Die Loreley – Entwicklung einer literarischen Gestalt zu einem internationalen Mythos," *Gender und Interkulturalität. Ausgewählte Beiträge der 3. Fachtagung Frauen-/Gender-Forschung in Rheinland-Pfalz*, ed. Liesel Hermes, Andrea Hirschen, Iris Meißner. Frauen- und Gender-Forschung in Rheinland-Pfalz, 4 (Tübingen: Stauffenburg-Verlag, 2002), 19–28. For a good overview of the many manifestations of this mythical figure, as it had emerged since the Romantic movement (Clemens Brentano, *Godwi*, 1801), see <https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Loreley> (last accessed on Feb. 15, 2020).

**30** Carolyn Larrington, *King Arthur's Enchantresses: Morgan and Her Sisters in Arthurian Tradition* (New York: I. B. Tauris, 2006); Jill M. Hebert, *Morgan le Fay, Shapeshifter. Arthurian and Courtly Cultures* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013); Kristina Pérez, *The Myth of Morgan la Fey. Arthurian and Courtly Cultures* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014). The literature on Merlin and also on Morgan le Fay is legion.

**31** *Das Nibelungenlied*. Nach der Ausgabe von Karl Bartsch herausgegeben von Helmut de Boor. 22nd rev. and expanded ed. by Roswitha Wisniewski. Deutsche Klassiker des Mittelalters (Wiesbaden: Heinrich Albert Verlag, 1996), stanza 1. The number of relevant studies on this poem is legion, but there is no room here to engage with the vast range of relevant research literature for obvious reasons. There are very good English translations available, but here I rely on my own. For a recent overview of the relevant research, see Jan-Dirk Müller, *Das*

minuscule as it appears to be, carries tremendous importance and deserves much more careful examination than previous scholarship has granted it.

Whereas before only Siegfried, the exotic hero from the Netherland, had had personal contact with creatures from the otherworld, dwarfs and dragons, and thus had increased his already superhuman strength, it is now Hagen's terms to engage with them. However, whereas Siegfried had enormously profited from such encounters, with him being somehow a member of that world anyway and then taking over the control of it, granting him access to enormous powers of a different kind, Hagen is barely more than a curious observer and profits only marginally from what he learns from those maids.

Of course, at this point, Siegfried is already dead, murdered by Hagen. Kriemhild has tried in vain to avenge her husband's demise, but has finally married the Hunnish king Etzel/Attila, primarily because she hopes that this will grant her the necessary means to avenge the murder of her first husband. In order to realize her plans, she has invited the Burgundian royal family to come for a visit, and although Hagen had specifically warned against such a journey into foreign lands where Kriemhild's hatred would be waiting for them (stanzas 1455–61 and 1469), Gunther and his brothers accepted that invitation. Yet, having arrived at the mighty river Danube, the Burgundians are temporarily stuck because there is no bridge and no ferryboat to take them across the water.

Hagen is always the heroic savior in every difficult situation, especially now without Siegfried overshadowing him. At first, however, he also does not know how to solve the problem since even the ferryboats are hidden (stanza 1524, 1). In fact, he himself is worried that they might thus run into great trouble and could lose many of their men because they are in hostile land (stanza 1525), but King Gunther urges him to search for a way to cross the river; no one, as Hagen himself affirms, wants to drown in the swollen river. Exploring the new territory, Hagen then comes across a spring, or a pond, near the shore, as we would have to assume (stanza 1530), and since he hears noise coming from that secret spot, he approaches that location and discovers three otherworldly women, "wīsiu wīp" (stanza 1530, 3; wise women) who are taking a bath to cool off (verse 4). While in many other similar situations in medieval literature the male protagonist seeks to contact those women, being immediately attracted to them because of their extraordinary beauty (Marie de France, "Lanval"; *Sir Orfeo*; see also the Welsh *Mabinogion*), Hagen approaches the water with devious

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*Nibelungenlied*. 4th, newly rev. and expanded ed. Klassiker-Lektüren, 5 (2001; Berlin: Erich Schmidt Verlag, 2015). See also *A Companion to the Nibelungenlied*, ed. Winder McConnell. Studies in German Literature, Linguistics, and Culture (Columbia, SC: Camden House, 1998).

intentions and takes away their clothing. The women, as soon as they have noticed him, escape from there, obviously knowing just too well that Hagen represents a serious danger for them (stanza 1531, 4). Instead of having approached the water and its inhabitants in a polite and open fashion, Hagen “sleich in tougen nâch” (stanza 531, 1; snuck up to them secretly), obviously aware that they would otherwise flee from him. However, he does not hurt them and only awaits their own move, probably because he could not really gain control over them anyway. Yet, without their clothing, they are in dire straits, so it seems, and one of them, now finally identified properly as a “merewîb” (stanza 1532, 1; mermaid), and named, “Hadeburc,” appeals to him to return their clothing; they would then also reward him by prophesying his future. She does not offer any sexual service and offers nothing but her prediction.

The situation proves to be most curious since they appear to know him well from the past, otherwise they would not have fled from that site to protect themselves. Moreover, they are aware of his name (stanza 1532, 2), and Hadeburc tries her best diplomatic strategy to convince him to comply with her request to avoid hostility. Without their clothing, they would be, as we must surmise, in deep trouble, maybe almost like in the case of “Bisclavret” by Marie de France, despite the reversed gender roles there. But the mermaids are less than ordinary human beings and appear to float above the water, “sam di vogele” (stanza 1533, 1; like birds). Because of this supernatural appearance, Hagen is, although we do not learn why, fully prepared to trust in whatever they would tell him about his future at Etzel’s court.

In stanza 1533 we are assured that they are informing him about everything he needs to know, and he trusts them entirely, so it seems, because Hadeburc flatters him by invoking his esteem as an extraordinary hero (stanza 1534, 3). However, she obfuscates the issue and only talks about the future in vague terms: “‘ir mügt wol rîten in Etzeln lant” (stanza 1534, 1; you will be able to ride to Etzel’s country), where he would gain much fame (verse 4). For Hagen, this sounds most convincing, and he delights in this prospect so much that he returns the clothing, which they put on immediately (stanza 1535).

Yet, at that point a second mermaid, if that is the right term, Sigelint, turns to Hagen and reveals to him the full truth that they all will die in battle in the country of the Huns. According to her, Hadeburc had lied in order to retrieve her clothing, whereas she is telling him the truth, which, curiously, Hagen does not want to accept for quite some time (stanza 1538), although he himself had previously spoken in dire terms about the dangers involved in traveling to King Etzel and his wife Kriemhild. Why would Hagen here act so naively as if he knew nothing about the queen’s undying hatred of him? We can only explain this odd situation by keeping in mind that the poet wanted to build a case for Sigelint

to go into more details concerning the future for the Burgundians, who are by now called Nibelungs, signaling their imminent death (stanza 1520, 1), that is, their ominous association with the nether forces resting in the other world.

These mermaids know the future, which seems to be their only supernatural abilities, and they can foretell that none of the warriors will return except for the chaplain (stanza 1539, 3–4). For Hagen, this prophecy deeply irritates him, and he would prefer to keep it a secret (stanza 1540, 2–3), so he deviates from this pronouncement of their certain death by asking for the right method to get across the river. The mermaid realizes that he is obtuse to her specific warning, so she stops belaboring this horrific point and only explains where he can find the house of the ferryman on the other side of the river (stanza 1541, 3–4). This is confirmed by another one of the three mermaids (stanza 1542), who reprimands him for being too rash and inconsiderate, that is, for his unwillingness to listen to them, “jâ ist iu gar ze gâch” (v. 2; indeed, you rush too much). There is only one ferryman nearby who would be in a position to take them to the other side of the river, but he would require a high price for his service (stanza 1544). Worse even, as she explains, he would be willing to transport only one specific hero, called Amelrîch, who once had left those parts of the world to avoid further enmity, so Hagen would have to pretend to be him (stanza 1545). Arrogance, hatred, hostility, and deception are the rule of the game here, and even the mermaids resort to trickery in their exchanges with this dark hero. As an aside, there is no erotic attraction between them and Hagen; he does not ask anything else from them, and they do not offer anything but their prophecy.

Arrogant Hagen (“übermuote,” stanza 1546, 1) immediately subscribes to this strategy because the physical barrier of the river cannot be overcome in any other way. We also should mention that the narrator subsequently characterizes the ferryman in the same way as Hagen (stanza 1550, 4), and examine the bloody exchange between the two men, with Hagen slaying his opponent (stanza 1559), but we need to keep the mermaids in mind whom the narrator actually has left out of sight by now. Even Hagen does not mention them until the end of the day after he has accomplished his task, remembering suddenly the ominous warning that only the chaplain would survive (stanza 1571). In this context, the mermaids are characterized as “wilde” (stanza 1571, 3; wild), as if they did not belong to human society, although Hagen had exchanged words with them and although they wore clothing. This epithet is repeated a second time once the priest has managed to swim to the other side of the river and thus to save his life.

Although Hagen has proven to be a ferocious and inhumane warrior, willing to slay or kill anyone in his way, the narrator characterizes particularly the mermaid as “wilde” again (stanza 1577, 3), which underscores not their monstrous



nature, but their superhuman ability to foretell the future. At that point Hagen has to believe what they had predicted, so he makes his final move after they all have crossed the river: he destroys the boat and throws the pieces into the water (stanza 1578). William Whobrey correctly renders the adjective “wilde” as “other-worldly” because the mermaids have prophetic powers and belong to a different category of creatures not of this world.<sup>32</sup>

It is completely clear that this scene turns the Danube into the Burgundians’ proverbial Rubicon, or, as Caesar had allegedly formulated in 49 B.C.E., “alea iacta est.” In fact, Hagen had tested the nixies’ prophecy that only the chaplain would return alive while they all would perish in Hunnish lands with great apprehension. By throwing the poor man into the water and pushing him even further down when he tries to reach the ship to save himself, he wants to find out the truth of what those mermaids had revealed to him. Surprisingly, although the chaplain cannot swim, with God’s help he then reaches the save shore, which thus convinces Hagen that death, indeed, is awaiting them all.<sup>33</sup>

The difference between Siegfried and Hagen becomes very clear in this scene insofar as the former had consistently endeavored to overcome and defeat also the creatures from the other world, demonstrating his supreme power even of the dwarfs and the dragon. In fact, we would not be far off in identifying Siegfried as a character much aligned with the underworld, drawing enormous strength from there (invisibility cloak, the dragon’s blood covering his body, control over the Nibelung warriors down there). Hagen, on the other hand, only confronts the mermaids, steals their clothing, and can thus extort from them the prophecy. He then returns their clothing and simply leaves because he has different goals, does not care about the world of nixies, and only wants to protect his lord and their men. While Siegfried regularly demonstrated the extent to which he actually belonged to the otherworld, Hagen only has some contacts with it and then moves on, being informed by the mermaids about his future with its tragic conclusion.

Altogether, however, the poet projects a rather curious scene with those fairy figures; they operate like real people taking a bath, and yet they seem to hover above the water like birds or fog. They speak normally, demonstrate

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32 *The Nibelungenlied with The Klage*, ed. and trans., with an intro., by William Whobrey (Indianapolis, IN, and Cambridge: Hackett Publishing, 2018), 129.

33 For the significance of the river in medieval literature, see Albrecht Classen, *Water in Medieval Literature: An Ecocritical Reading*. Ecocritical Theory and Practice (Lanham, MD, Boulder, CO, et al.: Lexington Books, 2018), 12–14, 215–16; id., “Waterways as Landmarks, Challenges, and Barriers for Medieval Protagonists: Crossing Rivers as Epistemological Hurdles in Medieval Literature,” *Amsterdamer Beiträge zur älteren Germanistik* 78 (2018): 441–67.

embarrassment and fear when their clothes are gone, they disagree amongst each other about what to reveal to Hagen about the Burgundian's destiny, they are fully aware about the political situation in that region, and properly advise Hagen how to convince the ferryman to transport them across the river. They are, in other words, highly hybrid, in body and mind, carrying ordinary Germanic names, but they do not belong to human society. Despite their better understanding of what the future will hold for the Burgundians, Hagen mostly disrespects their warning, although he still tests its veracity with the help of the poor chaplain. Ultimately, because of his encounter with these mermaids, Hagen's true character comes through very specifically, being absolutely resolute in carrying out all of his plans irrespective of dangers and threats, undaunted by the possible doom as predicted to him, and brutal to the extreme in carry on as the leader of the army: "Dô sprach in grimmen muote der küene Hagene" (1540, 1; Then the ferocious Hagen said, in his bitter mind).

Hagen and the other Burgundians are advised three times not to travel to Etzel's court; first, the kitchen master Rumolt suggests that they should simply enjoy their good time back home, eat and drink to the fullest, and avoid dangers awaiting them abroad (stanzas 1462–66).<sup>34</sup> Second, the queen mother Uote has a dream foretelling her the tragedy that would occur at the Hunnish court (stanza 1506), but Hagen dismisses it as foolish and as undermining their honor (stanza 1507). Third, the mermaid Sigelint strongly advises him to return before it would be too late: "Jâ soltu kêren widere. daz ist dir an der zît" (stanza 1537, 1; You should go home, there is still time for it), but not even she can change Hagen's mind.<sup>35</sup> He rather accepts that everyone will become a victim in the battle against the Hunnish soldiers than to change the course of events. The mermaids are certainly correct in their prediction, but Hagen is too self-centered and caught in his ideals of masculinity to listen to any advice from the outside. In contrast to all other examples to be discussed below, Hagen has no real respect for and interest in the mermaids, and the narrator himself quickly dismisses them into the background of his account.

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<sup>34</sup> See, for example, Alan V. Murray, "Der König und der Küchenmeister: Überlegungen zur Rolle Rumolts im 'Nibelungenlied'," *Nibelungenlied und Klage: Ursprung, Funktion, Bedeutung; Symposium Kloster Andechs 1995 mit Nachträgen bis 1998*, ed. Dietz-Rüdiger Moser. Beibände zur Zeitschrift "Literatur in Bayern", 2 (Munich: Literatur in Bayern, 1998), 395–410.

<sup>35</sup> See now Katherine DeVane Brown, "Courtly Rivalry, Loyalty Conflict, and the Figure of Hagen in the 'Nibelungenlied'," *Monatshefte* 107.3 (2015): 355–81.

## Flower Girls in Priest Lambrecht's *Alexander*

Fairies and nixies normally emerge in medieval literature only insofar as they enter into direct exchanges and contacts with humans, and in practically all cases the relationship is determined by erotic attractions (female fairies, male people). This is most dramatically illustrated by Priest Lambrecht in his *Alexander*, the so-called *Strassburger Alexander* from ca. 1150, which has survived in a version from ca. 1170. This is one of the many European versions of the *Alexander* narrative, in this case directly based on the Old French version by Alberic of Bisinzo from ca. 1100 (only 105 verses have survived).<sup>36</sup> The Middle High German poet seems to have originated from the area of Trier and uses a Rheno-Franconian dialect. His *Alexander* enjoys high respect among researchers especially because it is the earliest text in Middle High German based on a French source and the first poem to deal with the myth of Alexander in medieval Germany. The poet was obviously familiar both with the history of Troy and with the tradition of medieval German heroic poetry because he identifies Alexander as superior to such characters as Achilles, Hector, Paris, and Nestor, and then also as superior to Hagen (*Nibelungenlied*), Wate (*Kudrun*), Herwig, and Wolfwin (other epic poems).<sup>37</sup> Considering the date of composition, he must have had knowledge of earlier, oral versions of those heroic poems.

As scholarship has often noted already, the entire *Alexander* tradition, including Lambrecht's text, is deeply determined by the protagonist's account of the many wonders and miracles that he witnessed in the mysterious Orient

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36 *Das Alexanderlied des Pfaffen Lamprecht (Strassburger Alexander)*, Text, Nacherzählung, Worterklärungen von Irene Ruttman (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1974); for a wide range of studies addressing Alexander narratives in medieval literature, see *Alexanderdichtungen im Mittelalter: Kulturelle Selbstbestimmung im Kontext literarischer Beziehungen*, ed. Jan Cölln, Susanne Friede, and Hartmut Wulfram. Veröffentlichungen aus dem Göttinger Sonderforschungsbereich 529 "Internationalität nationaler Literaturen". Serie A, 1 (Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag, 2000); see also *Herrschaft, Ideologie und Geschichtskonzeption in Alexanderdichtungen des Mittelalters*, ed. Ulrich Mölk. Veröffentlichungen aus dem Göttinger Sonderforschungsbereich 529 "Internationalität nationaler Literaturen". Serie A, 2 (Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag, 2002). Cf. also Elisabeth Lienert, *Deutsche Antikenromane des Mittelalters*. Grundlagen der Germanistik, 39 (Berlin: Erich Schmidt Verlag, 2001), 30–49.

37 Werner Schröder, "Der Pfaffe Lambrecht," *Die deutsche Literatur des Mittelalters: Verfasserlexikon*, ed. Kurt Ruh et al. 2nd completely rev. ed. Vol. 5 (Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1985), 494–510; for a slightly updated overview with a more recent bibliography, see Volker Zapf, "Pfaffe Lambrecht," *Deutsches Literatur-Lexikon: Das Mittelalter*, ed. Wolfgang Achtnitz. Vol. 5: *Epik (Vers – Strophe – Prosa) und Kleinformen* (Berlin and Boston: Walter de Gruyter, 2013), 61–68.

(Orientalism *avant la lettre*, of course).<sup>38</sup> As we learn here in the Middle High German version, Alexander reports in his letter to Aristotle that once they wanted to discover miracles (5161) and thus came across a marvelous forest where their curiosity was fully satisfied because there they heard much music played on various instruments and songs performed by individuals whom the narrator does not identify. We are then told that the men eventually reached an open area which proved to be tantamount to a *locus amoenus* with many flowers and delightful springs, which provided Alexander and his companions with much pleasure: “heten da wundiris gemach” (5189; we enjoyed a splendid time there). Since it was summer time and they all suffered from the heat, the tall trees prevented the sun from glazing down to them with its full force, so the men greatly welcomed the shadow and the cool air.<sup>39</sup> Leaving their horses behind, the men then proceeded further into the forest, where they suddenly encountered a group of lovely maidens (5210) who were engaged in playing games, dancing around, singing, thus providing so much pleasure in the men’s hearts that they forgot all their previous hardship and suffering and felt complete happiness: “dâ vergaz ih angst unde leit / unde min gesinde, / unde swaz uns von kinde / ie leides gescach / biz an den selben tach” (5230–34; then I and my men forgot fear and suffering and whatever suffering we had experienced since childhood until today).

Undoubtedly, Lambrecht projects here a utopian space where the young women inspire the soldiers with so much delight that they completely give in to the erotic pleasures.<sup>40</sup> The otherworldly character of this scene is most charming, and does not carry any negative or tragic connotations, as is the case in the *Nibelungenlied*.<sup>41</sup> This is, of course, in conformity with the entire *Alexander* tradition because the young Greek leader practically never experiences defeat or

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38 Jürgen Brummack, *Die Darstellung des Orients in den deutschen Alexandergeschichten des Mittelalters* (Berlin: Erich Schmidt, 1966); Jean Prieur, *Alexandre le Grand et les mystères d’Orient* (Paris: F. Lanore, 1987); Andrea Moltzen, *Curiositas: Studien zu „Alexander“, „Herzog Ernst“, „Brandan“, „Fortunatus“, „Historia von D. Johann Fausten“ und „Wagnerbuch“*. Schriften zur Mediävistik (Hamburg: Verlag Dr. Kovač, 2016).

39 See now Albrecht Classen, *The Forest in Medieval German Literature: Ecocritical Readings from a Historical Perspective*. Ecocritical Theory and Practice (Lanham, Boulder, et al.: Lexington Books, 2015), 30. However, there I do not engage with Lambrecht’s text at length.

40 Tomas Tomasek, “Die Welt der Blumenmädchen im ‘Straßburger Alexander’: ein literarischer utopischer ‘Diskurs’ aus dem Mittelalter,” *“Das Schöne soll sein”: Aisthesis in der deutschen Literatur; Festschrift für Wolfgang F. Bender*, ed. Peter Heßelmann (Bielefeld: Aisthesis, 2001), 43–55.

41 See the contributions to *Utopie im Mittelalter: Begriff – Formen – Funktionen*, ed. Heiko Hartmann and Werner Röcke. Das Mittelalter, 18.2 (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2013); see also Heiko

suffering to an extreme and just has to move forward in his military campaign to achieve all of his goals. However, this short scene in the forest represents a remarkable respite, a lull in all the tough events outside, deeply tinged in eroticism and appealing to a male audience's sexual appetite.

Once having highlighted the miraculous character of those flower girls, the narrator then turns to the critical question of their origin, an issue that never even occurs to Hagen when he has to deal with the mermaids. Correlating those girls with the seasons, Alexander reports that once flowers appeared and bloomed with the arrival of spring, outshining even the most beautiful flowers on the outside of the forest (5256–27), those girls came out of the blossoms. However, he insists that they talked and behaved like ordinary people (5267–68). They appeared to him like twelve-year old girls and were more attractive than any other women he had ever encountered. More important than their physical appearance, they knew how to entertain everyone through their singing and dancing, laughing and joking, without failing in demonstrating the best possible manners (5282). However, once they stepped out of a shaded spot and were exposed to the sun, they passed away (5287–92). They were really flower girls and could not live in any other way, as much as they provided joy and sheer delight to the men.

Alexander called his entire army into the forest, and all the men experienced the greatest happiness with the flower girl until one day the season changed and everything came to an end. After three months and twelve days, the flowers withered away, the trees lost their leaves, the springs stopped flowing, the birds became silent, and thus the girls also died away. The historical narrator does not understand the reasons for this change and can only lament this tragic development, without knowing how to intervene or to rescue the beloved young women. There are no further reflections, only the final observation: “do ih si sah sterben / und die blumen verterben, / do schiet ih trurich dannen / mit allen minen mannen” (5355–58; when I saw them dying, and saw the flowers withering away, I and all my men left that place filled with sorrow).

Subsequently, the narrator no longer mentions those flower girls who served only for a pleasant interlude in the world of wonders, somewhere in the Orient. Alexander and his men freely enjoyed those girls, but they could not keep them alive because they passed away with the end of the warm season. However, although those fairy-like creatures are not only part of nature since they perform many of the arts commonly associated with the courtly world. We are told that

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Hartmann, “Utopias/Utopian Thought,” *Handbook of Medieval Studies: Terms – Methods – Trends*, ed. Albrecht Classen. Vol. 2 (Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2010), 1400–08.

that they know how to sing, but we are not informed whether they ever talked to the men, here disregarding their singing. They appear as mysteriously as the three mermaids in the *Nibelungenlied*, but they are not doomsayers, they do not carry any negative news, and do not get actively involved in the men's lives. Instead, following the natural course of the seasons, they are brought to life through the opening of the blossoms of the spring flowers and they pass away once the cold season sets in again. The narrator can only say that they were the most attractive female creatures in the entire world: "sus lussame wib / sint der werlt unkunt" (5308–09; such pleasant women are unknown in the world). Losing them to their natural death causes great sadness in the men's heart, but there is nothing they can do about it. These flower girls make a kind of cameo appearance as they come and go inexplicably, intimately associated with the miracles in the Oriental forest. Once they arrive, they bring with them great joy; once they leave and pass away, they cause great sorrow in the men's heart.

Lambrecht here projects a unique scene of utopian properties, in the middle of the forest, far away from all human society, but certainly subject to the laws of nature. Flowers last only a short time and wither away, and this is the same with these girls. They are different than other fairies since they are completely subject to the changes of nature, but while they exist, they create nothing but sheer joy and happiness. Neither Alexander and his men nor the girls have any chance to influence their own destiny and thus become victims of the imminent Fall season, which we might have to read allegorically targeting Alexander's *vanitas*.<sup>42</sup> Physical happiness and joy are just evanescent, as the experience with the flower girls informs him. The more Alexander encounters the Oriental monsters and monstrous figures, the less does he know about his own identity.

Similarly to Hagen's failure, if he had considered closely the transitoriness of the fairy girls, he could have drawn fundamental insights into his own existence and its physical limitations and contingency. We can thus conclude that both poets project imaginary features, but only to signal their deceptiveness, illusionary character, and elusiveness. The Otherworld, represented by those fairies, could teach fundamental teachings, could illustrate what the future holds, but the human characters are not capable of understanding the epistemological

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<sup>42</sup> Gert Hübner, "Kognition und Handeln im Vorauer Alexander, im Straßburger Alexander und im König Rother," *Archiv für das Studium der Neueren Sprachen und Literaturen* 157.2 (2005): 241–58; for an anthropological perspective, see Albrecht Classen, "The Amazing East and the Curious Reader: Twelfth-Century World Exploration through a Writer's Mind: Lamprecht's *Alexander*," *Orbis Litterarum* 55.5 (2000): 317–39. For a study of Lambrecht's work in the context of the manuscripts, see Wolfgang Fischer, *Die Alexanderliedkonzeption des Pfaffen Lambrecht* [sic]. Medium Aevum. Philologische Studien, 2 (Munich: Eidos Verlag, 1964).

messages of those dream-like figures who come and go, briefly intervene in human life, but do not get deeply involved because they are, ultimately, intangible and even evanescent.

## Egenolf von Staufenberg's *Peter von Staufenberg*

A little discussed fairy figure also appears in the Middle High German verse narrative (*mære*), *Peter von Staufenberg*, or *Der Ritter von Staufenberg*, allegedly composed by a knight by the name Egenolf von Staufenberg around 1310 who lived in the area of Strasbourg, but the text was first copied down in a fifteenth-century manuscript, apart from a fourteenth-century fragment and several incunabula and early modern prints.<sup>43</sup> This short poetic tale consisting of 1192 verses offers a rather mysterious account of the love affair between the protagonist and a fairy who introduces herself to this knight and offers herself as his mistress. He immediately falls in love with her and completely abides by the condition that she sets for their relationship to last never to marry a human woman. Once he would break that taboo, he would subsequently live on only for three days. Peter is able to hold on to his oath for a long time although his friends and relatives urge him ever more seriously to change his mind and to accept marriage as the normal mode of living within a knightly society, especially since they expect him to produce an heir.

While Peter can withstand their pressure, insisting that he would never enter into a marriage contract, when he is at the court of the new king in Frankfurt, the latter invites him to accept a young relative of his as wife. Even though the protagonist tries his best to resist this proposition, he is eventually forced first to reveal who his true love is, and then to accept that young woman in marriage. He has one more opportunity to be with his true love, but she foretells him that his destiny is already sealed and that he will die quickly once he would have observed one of her feet poking through the ceiling during the

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43 *Der Ritter von Staufenberg*, ed. Eckhard Grunewald. Altdeutsche Textbibliothek, 88 (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer, 1979), 158–67. For a comprehensive study, see Richard Ernest Walker, *Peter von Staufenberg: Its Origin, Development, and Later Adoption*. Göppinger Arbeiten zur Germanistik, 289 (Göppingen: Kümmerle, 1980); Ingrid Kasten, “Tabu und Lust: zur Verserzählung ‘Der Ritter von Staufenberg’,” *Neugier und Tabu: Regeln und Mythen des Wissens*, ed. Martin Baisch and Elke Koch. Rombach Wissenschaften. Reihe Scenae, 12 (Freiburg i. Br.: Rombach, 2010), 235–52. For the surviving manuscripts with this text, see online at: <http://www.handschriftencensus.de/werke/1980> (last accessed on Feb. 15, 2020).

festive dinner. Although the narrator emphasizes specifically that this was the most beautiful leg one had ever seen (1058–60), it still signals Peter's death as a result of his transgression.

*Peter von Staufenberg* poses numerous interpretive challenges and presents a variety of intriguing aspects that deny an easy explanation. We are clearly told that Peter himself represents a model knight who commands all the skills and the proper character one could expect from such a person. He is always victorious, is always kind and friendly to everyone, demonstrates a highly noble character, and knows exceedingly well how to handle himself in a tournament, in war, at court, and around women. There is never any doubt about his devout submission under God, his careful observation of all rules imposed on Christians, and his deep faithfulness. He regularly prays, attends mass, gives alms, and proves to be, altogether, a truly ideal character. In fact, Peter is known and praised all over Europe, as the narrator emphasizes, listing the following countries where he is enjoying great respect: Swabia, Bavaria, Hungary, England, France, Tuscany, Lombardia, and even the Muslim territories (112–34).

The fairy is also described in exceedingly positive terms, and she does not seem to originate from any dark world. She is, as to be expected, the most beautiful woman, she is also a pious Christian, and she has loved Peter from early on as soon as he could ride on a horse. Moreover, she emphasizes that she had protected and supported him ever since and thus identifies herself as the master protectress and the good spirit behind everything he had ever accomplished: "ich huet in allen landen / din vil wol vor schanden, / und war ie gestuond dins herzen gir, / da waz ich alle zit by dir" (359–62; wherever you went I protected you from experiencing shame, and wherever you had set your mind to go to, I was always with you).

As much as Peter has fallen in love with her, and as much as he would like to be with her for the rest of his life, as he openly declares, she immediately imposes a taboo on him as a condition that he would have to fulfil in order to enjoy her as his companion. He must be her exclusive partner, not in marriage, but through his personal commitment to her, and if he were ever to dare to marry another woman, he would have to die. The fairy would not even object to Peter having another girl friend, as long as he would not marry her (389). In other words, she would not be opposed to him having sexual relations, as long as they do not turn into a legally binding contract, marriage.

Curiously, the fairy then even refers to God as the ultimate witness to this condition (403), and she utters this warning only with respect to Peter. We never learn what might happen with her if her lover were to transgress the taboo, and she does not explain at all why she would impose this taboo. We do not even know whether she herself has set up that condition or is subject to it



herself. Her words, however, clearly illustrate what the consequences would be for him. The poet only reveals that she had always been around Peter, though invisibly, and that she is deeply in love with him. Once they both have reached the agreement, she is then also most willing to sleep with him, but not in the meadow, as he suggests (428–29); instead, she urges him to return home, to retire to his private chamber, and then she would join him for a night of love-making (470–72), but not before he would have heard his mass and had confessed all of his sins to a priest. In other words, she openly indicates her own Christian faith and thus distances herself from any shade of suspicion of herself being a member of demonic forces or the devil (480–81). Moreover, as she reveals, God has given her the power to be anywhere in the world at a moment's notice, not being bound by any physical laws. God has granted her a “fryes leben” (500; free life).

While these two individuals enjoy each other in uninhibited sexual exchanges and love each other dearly (560–65), they are not bound to each other by a marital oath and hence are not subject to the rule and control of the Church. In fact, Peter successfully defends himself subsequently against all efforts by his friends and relatives to accept a formal marriage proposal, clearly mindful of his own promise to the fairy and of his deep love for her. He openly criticizes the institution of marriage and characterizes it as potentially destructive and hurtful: “die e gar vil zerstoeret / manger hande froeyden vil; / da vor ich mich noch hueten wil” (678–80; marriage often destroys the happiness of many people, and I want to protect myself against that). Instead, he wants to enjoy his life as a young man free from all marital obligations (681–82), which silences his friends. However, he does not reveal his true reasons, the fairy, even when he is approached by a highly respected authority figure, who quickly realizes that Peter has truly made up his mind (709–16). The poet obviously critically engaged with the institution of marriage and demonstrated his opposition, although only in this specific case, which does not allow us to draw wider conclusions, especially not with regard to Church laws or social contracts prevalent at that time.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> There is much research on the history of marriage, but our narrative seems to fall outside of the dominant discourse, unless we consider, for instance, some of the comments by Heloise, who was forced to marry her lover Peter Abelard and yet later protested against this in one of her letters to him. Albrecht Classen, “Abaelards *Historia Calamitatum*, der Briefwechsel mit Heloise und Gottfrieds von Straßburg *Tristan*: Historisch-biographische und fiktionale Schicksale. Eine Untersuchung zur Intertextualität im zwölften und dreizehnten Jahrhundert,” *arcadia* 35.2 (2000): 225–53. For a variety of relevant historical and theological sources, see *Love, Marriage, and Family in the Middle Ages: A Reader*, ed. Jacqueline Murray (Peterborough, Ont.: Broadview Press, 2001). This topic has been discussed by many recent scholars.

Indeed, Peter never falls in love with any other woman and remains completely loyal to the fairy. Only when he is finally caught in political constraints, with the king offering him his own niece as wife, does he find himself forced to reveal the truth about his emotional situation. This revelation, however, horrifies all the high-ranking clerics in attendance, who quickly rush to the conclusion that his beloved lady can only be a demon or the devil himself. However, his own words about her do not support this at all since he firmly praises her as the most beautiful woman in the world, as his most trusted companion who magically joins him whenever he wants her to be with him, and hence gives him full happiness, not to forget an endless supply of goods as he might need them (937–47). On the other hand, as he warns them all, if he were to submit to the king's request and marry his niece, he would certainly die within three days (949–54). Religion and belief in pagan aspects conflict with each other here, but for the medieval author the basic Christian teachings do not matter here at all.

Tragically, which could be read as an implicit criticism of the Church as such, the collective clergy finally convinces him that he should not trust this ghostly phenomenon and that he should accept the royal woman as his wife. But the fairy then appears at night and foretells him his destiny, that is, he will die as outlined before, and that nothing could prevent this for him, which she reports with deepest regret since she will lose him thereby for good (1009–28). From here, the verse narrative comes to a quick conclusion insofar as during the wedding festivities the fairy makes her one leg appear extending through the ceiling, which signals Peter's imminent death (1054–62). Although the servants search throughout the castle for the upper body belonging to the foot, they are not successful. For the attendees, the only explanation can be that it must have been a devilish appearance, but the narrator does not confirm that and leaves the outcome open, except that Peter then dies, indeed, after having received the last rite from a priest, allowing him to pass away within the framework of the Church.

There is no indication anywhere that the narrator/poet intended to project the fairy as a demonic figure. She only felt love for Peter and granted him every wish, except marriage to another human woman. Curiously, however, she herself could not transition to the world of people and remains a spiritual being that subsequently entirely disappears from the stage. We only hear of Peter's young widow who laments his death bitterly and then enters a monastery in order to turn away from this life for good. Nevertheless, there is no indication anywhere that the fairy might be regarded as a negative, dark force. She does not deceive Peter and grants him absolute happiness, as long as he stays loyal to her and observes the taboo.

Tragically, however, the political constraints make it impossible for him to live out his dream existence with the fairy, who appears only to Peter and to no other person, except for his squire at the beginning of the tale. Altogether, this fairy is granted only a cameo appearance, but even during that short period in this verse narrative, she is portrayed as a most positive force in Peter's life. If he had continued to obey her, he would have enjoyed happiness until the end of his existence, though it seems highly unlikely that there might have been any progeny. As is often the case, such as in Marie de France's "Lanval" (ca. 1190), this fairy provides him with much personal joy and love, sexual pleasures, and endless physical wealth, although no children. The critical point, however, does not consist so much in the erotic dimension, since there are no conflicts between the protagonist and his love.

The problem erupts only when Peter is forced to submit to the expectations of society that a young man, the ruler of a country, marry and thus secure an heir. Nevertheless, Peter would have been able to uphold his resistance against his relatives and other landed gentry, but he cannot do so against the collective of the king and the members of the high-ranking clergy.

Just as in the case of Konrad von Würzburg's *Partonopier und Meliur* (ca. 1290), which Egenolf obviously imitated or even copied to some extent,<sup>45</sup> the woman's magical powers meet so much resistance by the male authorities that they can convince the male protagonist that she cannot be trusted. Granted, Meliur is not a fairy and only operates with extraordinary magical skills, but the tensions between her and Partonopier's mother and then a bishop prove to be too much for the protagonist, so he submits under the authorities and betrays his beloved.<sup>46</sup>

Of course, there is magic involved, as with all fairies, even if in different terms, so not aligned with necromancy and learned strategies.<sup>47</sup> Instead, the

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45 Paul Jäckel, *Egenolf von Staufenberg ein Nachahmer Konrads von Würzburg* (Marburg a. d. L.: Pfeil, 1898).

46 Almut Suerbaum, "St. Melusine?: Minne, Martenehe und Mirakel im 'Ritter von Staufenberg'," *Texttyp und Textproduktion in der deutschen Literatur des Mittelalters*, ed. Elizabeth Andersen. Trends in Medieval Philology, 7 (Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2005), 331–45; Stephan Fuchs-Jolie, "Finalitätsbewältigung? 'Peter von Staufenberg', 'Undine' und die prekären Erzählregeln des Feenmärchens," *Historische Narratologie – mediävistische Perspektiven*, ed. Harald Haferland. Trends in Medieval Philology, 19 (Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2010), 99–117.

47 *Magic and Magicians in the Middle Ages and the Early Modern Time: The Occult in Pre-Modern Sciences, Medicine, Literature, Religion, and Astrology*, ed. Albrecht Classen. Fundamentals of Medieval and Early Modern Culture, 20 (Berlin and Boston: Walter de Gruyter, 2017). However, *Peter von Staufenberg* is not mentioned here. For Konrad's text, see *Konrads von*

fairy demonstrates deep and unfailing love for Peter, and greatly laments the fact that he has transgressed the taboo and is thus bound to die within three days. This is the kind of stuff we will later find in some of Shakespeare's plays (e.g., *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, 1595/1596), and then richly developed further in Romantic literature.

## Thüring von Ringoltingen's *Melusine*

The final example to be discussed here is the mysterious figure Melusine, already much examined by previous scholarship, which allows us to leave many of the major aspects aside and to concentrate on Melusine's origin and properties as a fairy who gets deeply involved in human society and yet cannot stay there for a number of reasons, her husband's transgression against her being of supreme relevance.<sup>48</sup> *Melusine* was highly popular in many European languages, and enjoyed

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Würzburg *Partonopier und Meliur*, ed. Karl Bartsch and Franz Pfeiffer. Deutsche Neudrucke. Reihe, Texte des Mittelalters (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1970); cf. Albrecht Classen, "Foreigners in Konrad von Würzburg's *Partonopier und Meliur*," *Meeting the Foreign in the Middle Ages*, ed. A. Classen (New York and London: Routledge, 2002), 226–48; id., "The Struggle against Fear as a Struggle for the Self in Konrad von Würzburg's *Partonopier und Meliur*," *Partonopeus in Europe: An Old French Romance and its Adaptations. Mediaevalia* 25.2, Special Issue (2004): 225–52. See also Anne Wawer, *Tabuisierte Liebe: mythische Erzählschemata in Konrads von Würzburg "Partonopier und Meliur" und im "Friedrich von Schwaben"* (Cologne, Weimar, and Vienna: Böhlau, 2000).

**48** Albrecht Classen, *The German Volksbuch: A Critical History of a Late-Medieval Genre*. Studies in German Language and Literature, 15 (Lewiston, NY, Queenston, and Lampeter: Edwin Mellen Press, 1995, reissued 1999), 141–162; for an insightful study, see Kurt Ruh, *Die 'Melusine' des Thüring von Ringoltingen*. Sitzungsberichte, Philosophisch-historische Klasse, 1985, 5 (Munich: Verlag der bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1985). See also the contributions to *550 Jahre deutsche Melusine – Coudrette und Thüring von Ringoltingen: Beiträge der wissenschaftlichen Tagung der Universitäten Bern und Lausanne vom August 2006*, ed. André Schnyder and Jean-Claude Mühlenhaller. Tausch, 16 (Bern, Berlin, et al.: Peter Lang, 2008); *Eulenspiegel trifft Melusine: Der frühneuhochdeutsche Prosaroman im Licht neuer Forschungen und Methoden. Akten der Lausanner Tagung vom 2. bis 4. Oktober 2008*, ed. Catherine Drittenbass and André Schnyder, together with Alexander Schwarz. Chloe, 42 (Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 2010). The text itself is well edited and commented in *Romane des 15. und 16. Jahrhunderts*, ed. Jan-Dirk Müller. Bibliothek der Frühen Neuzeit, 1 (Frankfurt a. M.: Deutscher Klassiker-Verlag, 1990), 9–176 (text), and 1012–87 (commentary). For a bibliography of all incunabula and early modern prints until 1600, see Bodo Gotzkowsky, "Volksbücher": *Prosaromane, Renaissance-novellen, Versdichtungen und Schwankbücher: Bibliographir der deutschen Drucke*. Part I: *Drucke des 15. und 16. Jahrhunderts* (Baden-Baden: Verlag Valentin Koerner, 1991), 105–25. Part II: *Drucke des 17. Jahrhunderts*, 39–41.

a high level of popularity far into the early modern age, which clearly underscores the enormous intrigue which many different accounts of such hybrid creatures exerted already in the Middle Ages, an intrigue and allure that have not lost any of their power until today.<sup>49</sup>

The novel, as composed by Thüring von Ringoltingen (1456), is too complex to be discussed here at full length, especially because the appearance of Melusine leaves everyone rather baffled, including her future husband, Reymond. She has, like many of the other fairies, prophetic knowledge, imposes a taboo on her husband, but this time she requires him never to follow her on Saturdays and spy on her whereabouts. Later in the story, he breaks his taboo, instigated by his brother who suspects her of committing adultery, and he discovers that she is sitting in a tub, having been transformed into a hybrid creature, with a snake's tail from her naval down. At first, Reymond keeps quiet, and she forgives him his transgression, but later, when he learns that one of his sons, Geoffrey, has burnt down an entire monastery out of fury that his brother Fraymund had turned into a monk, Reymond bursts out in public and reveals Melusine's true nature.

His punishment is not his death, as in *Peter von Staufenburg*, but in the loss of his wife, who sorrowfully is forced to leave mankind and to return to her own world of fairies, where she has to wait until the Day of Judgment before she can return. Reymond thereupon falls into deep depression and can never recover from his broken heart, living without his beloved Melusine. In essence, however, once having confessed to the pope in Rome and having retired to the monastery of Montserrat, he succumbs to his early death because of his deep feelings of guilt and his desperation (154). However, just three days before his death, Melusine appears one more time at the castle of Lusignan ("Lusiniën") as prophesied,

The symbolic number three appears here not by accident and finds also critical attention in *Peter von Staufenberg*. Both Melusine and the fairy in *Peter* consistently emphasize their good Christian faith, and yet they belong to the

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49 *Mélusine: moderne et contemporaine*, ed. Arlette Bouloumié. Bibliothèque Mélusine ([Lausanne]: L'Age d'homme, 2001); see also the useful survey article by Charles Lecouteux, "Melusine," *Enzyklopädie des Märchens*, ed. Rolf Wilhelm Brednich. Vol. 9.2 (Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1998), 556–61; *Melusine's Footprint: Tracing the Legacy of a Medieval Myth*, ed. Misty Urban, Deva F. Kemmis, and Melissa Ridley Elmes. *Explorations in Medieval Culture*, 4 (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2017); *Die schöne Melusine: Ein Feenroman des 15. Jahrhunderts in der deutschen Übertragung des Thüring von Ringoltingen. Die Bilder im Erstdruck Basel 1473/74 nach dem Exemplar der Universitäts- und Landesbibliothek Darmstadt*, ed. Heidrun Stein-Kecks, together with Simone Hespers and Benedicta Feraudi-Denier (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2012). For the digital online version, see <http://tudigit.ulb.tu-darmstadt.de/show/inc-iv-94> (last accessed on Feb. 20, 2019).

world of hybrid creatures against their own intentions. The allusion to the number three as a universal symbol of greatest significance, thus carries clear undertones and evokes, of course, the holy trinity. However, neither Melusine nor Reymond are redeemed, so the novel concludes actually open-endedly, informing us only about the destiny of the other sons in that family, some of whom commit the same kind of transgression as their father, this time against their own aunts, and then fail as well.

Parallel to the story of Peter, Reymond enjoys a delightful life with Melusine, whom, however, he has married, and with whom he has many offsprings. The critical issue proves to be the transgression which he is guilty of at the end. Melusine is thus condemned to depart from this life, for which the author does not offer any solution. Nevertheless, as the narrator points out in the conclusion, despite the catastrophic development within the marriage of Melusine with Reymond, they both laid the foundation for a dynasty vastly connected across Europe (174), which this novel documents elaborately.<sup>50</sup>

This now requires us to probe more deeply into where Melusine actually originated from and what made her impose that taboo on her husband. This will also shed light on the very beginning of the fairy lore reflected here, although this does not allow us to aim for a comprehensive discussion of the world of fairies altogether. After all, they have a different nature, do not belong to humanity, yet seem to be intimately connected with it, either out of love or by simple proximity, as in the *Nibelungenlied*.

We know that Melusine had actively sought out Reymond after he had accidentally killed his uncle during a hunt, and she makes the astounding offer of her own hand in marriage, much wealth, and progeny, promising him that if he observes the strict prohibition to search for her on Saturdays he would earn “guotes vnd eren / gelückes vnd saelden” (24; wealth and honor, good fortune and delights). Of course, no such a taboo would be worthy of mentioning if it would not be broken subsequently, as will happen twice and which then unleashes a torrent of catastrophic events, without destroying the dynasty, however. But Melusine is not an unproblematic character, as her son Geffroy later

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**50** See, for instance, Xenja von Ertzdorff, “Die Fee als Ahnfrau: Zur ‘Melusine’ des Thüring von Ringoltingen,” *Festschrift Hans Eggers zum 65. Geburtstag*, ed. Herbert Backes. *Beiträge zur Geschichte der deutschen Sprache und Literatur*, Sonderband, 94 (1972): 428–57; Claude Lexouteux, “Zur Entstehung der Melusinensage,” *Zeitschrift für deutsche Philologie* 98 (1979): 73–84. For more background, particularly in light of the French tradition, see Jean d’Arras, *Melusine: Or, the Noble History of Lusignan*, trans. and with an intro. by Donald Maddox and Sara Sturm-Maddox (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2012), 1–16.

finds out when he explores mountain caves in his search for a giant whom he needs to overcome and kill in order to free the land from this grave danger.

As one of the lords tell him, and as he later reads on the epitaph for his grandfather's grave, King Helmas of Albania had married a woman called Presine who also seems to have belonged to the world of fairies, although this is not clearly spelled out. She had likewise imposed a taboo on him, in this case never to try to sleep with her while she was still in childbed. Helmas did not obey this order, and when his daughters later learned about his transgression, they angrily imprisoned their father in the cave where he eventually found his death (135). Once this king had disappeared, giants had settled in the mountains and had caused much suffering in the country. Geffroy is thus not only tracing his family history, he also liberates the people from this overpowering danger.

As the epitaph then reveals, Presine had left her husband after his transgression, taking her daughters with her, who seem to be triplets (138), although Melusine is then identified as the youngest of the three (139). Presine could not stop her daughters from kidnapping and exiling their father, but she imposed a taboo on each one of them, which is expressed in Melusine's restriction, for instance, that her husband must not seek her out on Saturdays. Her two sisters suffer from similar imposition and must wait until the Day of Judgment to be freed from that taboo. The secret in the mountain thus finds its solution because Presine had actually placed the giants there in order to protect the tomb for her husband so that only those would learn about it who belong to the same dynasty: "das nyemandt darzuo komm der nit von vnserm geschlecht were" (139).

We clearly face a case of hermeneutic secrecy, with the written epitaph being the key to something deeply hidden, directly related to human sexuality, mirroring universal conflicts between the genders.<sup>51</sup> Why this is all the case the narrator never fully reveals, but Thüring is not different in that regard compared to the many other authors, translators, or artists who dealt with the myth of Melusine. This woman and her two sisters are regularly associated with water and the forest where the new dynasty emerges. Mysterious power structures, neither divine nor devilish, are alluded to, but never quite explained, probably because Melusine and her sisters represent the origin of a dynasty and also the precarious balance between life and death, tenuously maintained through the love relationship with Reymund, who destroys it all, however, at least in his own life, because he breaks the taboo.<sup>52</sup>

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51 "Objects of Memory as Hermeneutic Media in Medieval German Literature: Hartmann von Aue's *Gregorius*, Wolfram von Eschenbach's *Parzival*, Thüring von Ringoltingen's *Melusine*, and *Fortunatus*," *Amsterdamer Beiträge zur älteren Germanistik* 65 (2009): 159–82.

52 Albrecht Classen, *Water in Medieval Literature* (see note 33), 215–36.

Since both the literary accounts and the art-historical tradition deny us full illumination of the origin and meaning of this family of fairies, we face the uncomfortable and yet fascinating situation of being lost in the world of fantasy and imagination as it emerged already in the high Middle Ages, especially if we consider that both Walter Map and Gervasius of Tilbury were the first to mention this mysterious figure.<sup>53</sup> Moreover, the earliest visual presentation of Melusine appeared in the tile floor of the Otranto cathedral in southern Italy in the twelfth century, and similar figures populate many parts of medieval and early modern Europe.<sup>54</sup> Both the medieval and modern audiences are left, however, with many questions that defy simple, if any, answers.

## Conclusion

This now allows us to conclude with some global observations concerning the role and function of those fairies in all four narratives. They are all mysterious; they come from dark and wet spaces, and they are commonly associated with water and/or the forest. They can often predict the future and utter severe warnings against the male protagonists's potential transgressions or actions at large. At the same time, they tend to offer themselves as the men's ideal partners in love, although that relationship never lasts for good. As Lambrecht's account indicates, above all, they represent the original power of nature, and also of life in general terms, which the male figures can only observe with amazement and puzzlement. Those who are fortunate enough to be in contact with fairies or mermaids and understand how to treat them properly, that is, grant them respect and share their love, are highly privileged. But then transgression occurs, and all that happiness is lost.

Nowhere do medieval, or modern poets respectively, proffer truly rational explanations, so they tend to leave us with more questions than answers. Each time, there is a certain mystique associated with those figures who operate in liminal spaces and draw from ancient forces, without ever being really threatening, like Morgan le Fay, for instance. Those men who are entitled to engage with them more personally, if not even intimately, experience a radical transformation

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<sup>53</sup> See the commentary by Jan-Dirk Müller, ed. *Romane* (see note 48), 1022–31. While the Wikipedia article does not provide much more relevant information, it is useful for its long list of references to modern uses of Melusine: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Melusine> (last accessed on Feb. 20, 2019).

<sup>54</sup> Classen, *Water in Medieval Literature* (see note 33), 216–18.



of their lives to something better, but that happiness tends to be only ephemeral. Only in the case of Marie de France's "Lanval," to draw quickly from a non-German source, does the political situation prove to be so bad that the protagonist finds himself coerced to leave with his beloved, the fairy, and to disappear in Avalon, which none of the German sources replicate.<sup>55</sup>

In the *Nibelungenlied*, Hagen considers the fairies only as a medium to learn about their destiny, but ultimately he ignores them and marches all the Burgundians into their death. In Lambrecht's *Alexander*, the army encounters the flower girls in the middle of the forest, enjoys some time with them, but nature takes them away once again when the cold season sets in. Peter von Staufenberg could have enjoyed a happy life with his beloved, but the social and political forces are against him, and since he thus must transgress, he faces his death within three days. Reymond in *Melusine* is more fortunate since he can enjoy a long life with his fairy wife, but eventually he also loses his self-control and reveals the truth of Melusine's nature, which forces her to leave mankind.

Fairies are part of universal imagination and fantasy, and the Middle Ages and the early modern age were not exempt from that phenomenon. However, as we have observed in all four examples, the relationship between humans and fairies proves to be rather fraught with many tensions and outright deadly problems. Little wonder that writers, artists, and composers in the Romantic era so profusely responded to those medieval myths of fairies. They represented the ultimate erotic allure for men, they were the harbingers of terrible news, they provided endless power and resources to their male partners, and they also brought about their miserable end when the men transgressed their taboos. All four narratives allow us to peek into medieval subconsciousness determined by strong imagination and fantasy. The poets grant us insight into men's erotic desires, fear of marriage, dread of childbirth and its aftermath, and into the universal longing to know how to predict the future.

Each text leaves us rather baffled as to how to explain or even to rationalize the appearance of those fairies. They emerge on the narrative stage rather miraculously and then disappear again under different circumstances, which is typical of all images that are the product of our subconsciousness. None of these four texts – and this also applies to many other Arthurian or courtly narratives – targeted chil-

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55 Albrecht Classen, "Outsiders, Challengers, and Rebels in Medieval Courtly Literature: The Problem with the Courts in Courtly Romances," *Arthuriana* 26.3 (2016): 67–90.

dren per se; the fantastic elements here specifically appealed to an adult audience, as far as we can tell. This justifies us to interpret the references to those fairies as indicators of hidden desires and fears people have always had to deal with in their lives, which is a valid and significant claim we can make without any excessive reliance on too much psychological theory.

In order to open a wider, European perspective, taking us also beyond the confines of the Middle Ages, we could easily draw into our investigations William Shakespeare's famous *Midsummer Night's Dream* (1595/1596, first published in 1600) where most of the plot takes place outside of Athens in the forest where the fairy King Oberon and his wife Titania operate and pursue their own goals parallel to a planned wedding to get even with each other in their marital dispute.

This world of fairies obviously has intrigued audiences ever since the first performance of this play, but whereas the medieval and early modern German narratives are all deeply tinged by tragedy because the interactions between humans and fairies tend to result in transgressions and then in a catastrophe, Shakespeare made sure that his play results in a hilarious comedy of confusions, dreams, illusions, and silly strategies to deceive others.<sup>56</sup> From here we could move to the global dimensions of folkloric material dealing with fairies who have been believed to exist throughout times, but suffice it for the purpose of this study to note that the examples studied here represent an excerpt only, though a very important section because of its deeply erotic and tragic components.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> There are many critics of *Wikipedia*, but the article on this Shakespeare play proves to be just excellent, offering a maximum of information, data, and images in a minimum of space. Most important for us, here we are provided with a first-rate outline of the history of reception of this play, both by the audiences and by scholarship; the bibliography itself proves to be extensive and up-to-date: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/A\\_Midsummer\\_Night%27s\\_Dream](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/A_Midsummer_Night%27s_Dream) (last accessed on Feb. 15, 2020). Of course, critics might be right as to the digressive nature of *Wikipedia*, or its temporality. This, however, applies to every other webpage. Having followed *Wikipedia* for many years, I would claim that here we face a rather stable online encyclopedia for much of the standard knowledge.

<sup>57</sup> Jean N. Goodrich, "Fairy, Elves and the Enchanted Otherworld" (see note 26).

Isidro Luis Jiménez

# The Myth of the Amazons in Medieval Spain

In Western culture, the myth of the Amazons has embodied the symbolic existence of a gynocracy at the cultural and geographical margins of masculine control. My article explores the origin of the myth in classic sources and the way how the Amazons appeared recurrently in medieval Spanish literature through *Summae*, *Historiae*, travel books, the *Libro de Alexandre*, chronicles and chivalric romances, and briefly analyzes how the myth had a significant importance for the understanding and comprehension of the new American space and cultural otherness in the early modern period.

Amazons and their narrative were also perpetuated in medieval Spain; early Christian scholars like Saint Isidore of Seville (556–636) repeated Hellenistic and Latin topics on the myth. Hispanic travel books, like Latin or Castilian translations of Marco Polo and Mandeville, *El libro del conocimiento de todos los reinos* and *Embajada a Tamorlán*, a realistic report of an expedition to Central Asia composed by González de Clavijo, reproduce either the myth or similar ideas, such as feminine islands or bizarre sexual behavior in exotic women. *Historiae* and *summae* embedded Amazons in a general universal history: Various authors described the formation of the group of feminine warriors, as well as their relationship with the Goths, their involvement in the war of Troy, and the encounter with Alexander the Great. Different, individualized queens appear in chronological order: Hippolyta, Penthesilea, and Thalestris. Legends concerning Alexander the Great became extremely popular in medieval Europe, and increasingly feminized Amazons and the Macedonian conqueror appeared in *Libro d'Alixandre*. Finally, in late medieval Hispanic texts strongly influenced by Boccaccio and Christine de Pizan, Amazons evolved toward affectionate characters in sentimental literature: Juan Rodríguez del Padrón, for instance, composed a poem depicting a Penthesilea forced to suffer because of the death of a beloved man.

## Classical Amazons

There are no records of Amazons in Mycenaean, pre-Homeric Greece. The feminine warriors are described for the first time in ancient Greek epic poetry: the *Iliad*

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Isidro Luis Jiménez, University of Arizona, Tucson, USA

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(eighth-sixth centuries B.C.E.) and the partially preserved works of Arctinus (eighth century B.C.E.). In the Homeric works, the Amazons are defeated by Priamus long before the war of Troy, and they are described as fierce warriors “equal to men.”<sup>1</sup> Josine Blok explored the origin of the myth using a philological method, concluding that the term – “Amazon” – even being completely adapted to the Homeric texts, has a non-Greek origin. Altogether then, peripheral groups in the context of Iron Age migrations could have created the myth.<sup>2</sup>

In early Greek epic, the Amazons are closely linked to Achilles, who falls in love with one of them; Penthesilea appears as a major character, and feminine warriors support Trojans in their war effort against Greeks.<sup>3</sup> In contrast, the Amazons are most likely to appear in stories along with Heracles and Theseus in the classic period; the adoption of the latter as the local Athenian hero was probably due to the influence of Pisistratus. Narratives about the Amazons evolved toward a much less violent context; in this reconfiguration, Theseus abandoned Hippolyta for an appropriate wife according to classical Greek culture.

The most influential Greek perspective on the Amazons after Homer was that of Herodotus, who set his narrative in Scythia. Recent archaeological studies have demonstrated that the Greek myth was influenced by historic cultures in modern-day Ukraine, but the original Homeric and pre-Homeric narratives regarding the Amazons were not created, only reinforced in the classical period by contemporary Scythian culture, according to Valerie I. Guliaev:

It is possible that the myth of the Amazons was based in reality. Stories of armed, nomadic horsewomen could have been brought from the hinterlands of the Eurasian steppes to the Greeks, and were then transformed by Hellenic writers into the compelling legend of the beautiful and ruthless female warriors – the Amazons.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Josine Blok, *The Early Amazons: Modern and Ancient Perspectives on a Persistent Myth* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1995), 177, translates “ἀντιάνειραι” as “equivalent to men” or “hostile to men”; according to Batya Weinbaum, *Islands of Women and Amazons: Representations and Realities* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1999), 116, the meaning is “equal to men” and implies a denial of masculine hierarchy; according to Tassos A. Kaplanis, “The Inverted World of the Amazons: Aspects of a Persistent Myth in Early Modern Greek Literature,” *Greek Research in Australia: Proceedings of the Eighth Biennial International Conference of Greek Studies, Flinders University, June 2009*, ed. M. Rossetto, M. Tsianikas, G. Kouvalis, and M. Palatsoglou (Adelaide, Australia: Flinders University of South Australia, 2009), 291, the meaning of “ἀντιάνειραι” is “not man-hating, but rather equivalent to men.”

<sup>2</sup> Josine Blok, *The Early Amazons* (see note 1), 157–88.

<sup>3</sup> Arctinus, *Chrestomathia* II, ed. Davies, in Josine Blok *The Early Amazons* (see note 1), 195; Homère, *Iliade*, ed. Paul Monzon. 4 vols. (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1972).

<sup>4</sup> Valerie I. Guliaev, “Amazons in the Scythia: New Finds at the Middle Don, Southern Russia,” *World Archaeology* 35.1 (2003): 112–24; here 124.

Most of the modern approaches to the classical myth are based on a structuralist theoretical base.<sup>5</sup> Amazons can be easily interpreted as an incarnation of both otherness and artificial masculinity in a dual cultural system completely dominated by men: “Per una società patriarcale come quella ellenica, il mondo delle Amazzoni rappresentava l’abominabile rovesciamento dei propri valori tradizionali, il caos, e quindi non poteva che esser visto con terrore”<sup>6</sup> (For a patriarchal society like the Hellenic one, the world of the Amazons represented the abominable reversal of its traditional values, the chaos, and therefore could only be observed with terror<sup>7</sup>)

Greek women in the classical period were reduced to mere reproductive beings, usually much closer to nature than to culture; as a result, the Amazons allegedly lived in the geographical and cultural margins of society. They were strictly heterosexual, and because of that, they were regarded as even more dangerous because of their power on reproduction and family. Greeks believed women to be incapable of not exercising their sexual charms; often, the results were catastrophic precisely because of their blissful ignorance of what they were doing.<sup>8</sup>

Amazons, like Centaurs and their hypermasculinity, form an intermediate cultural category between humanity and bestiality; the others (Persians, Barbarians, Amazons) are completely expelled from the cultural sphere and can be loosely connected in a whole category by themselves because all of them live in distant lands; some Greek cultural heroes, like Heracles, precisely violated the peripheral space inhabited by Amazons. Finally, according to the structuralist interpretation, the myth of the Amazons would have been useful dealing with a structural gender contradiction in Greek culture, circumscribing proper feminine behavior where the myth acted as a failed exaggerated opposite, a distorting mirror of Greek femininity.<sup>9</sup>

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5 William Blake Tyrrell, *Amazons: A Study in Athenian Mythmaking* (Baltimore, MD: John Hopkins University Press, 1989); see also William Blake Tyrrell, “A View of the Amazons,” *Classical Bulletin* 57 (1980): 1–5.

6 Stefano Andres, *Le amazzoni nell’immaginario occidentale: il mito e la storia attraverso la letteratura* (Pisa: Edizioni ETS, 2001), 38–39; see also Jeannie Carlier-Détienne, “Les amazones font de guerre et l’amour,” *L’ethnographie* 76 (1980–1981): 11–33.

7 The translation is mine.

8 Peter Walcot, “Greek Attitudes Towards Women: The Mythological Evidence,” *Greece and Rome* 31.1 (1984): 37–47.

9 Page DuBois, *Centaurs and Amazons: Women and the Pre-History of the Great Chain of Being* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1991).

In the context of Hellenistic culture, rationality or *lógos* determined gender relations and stressed masculine superiority. At the same time, the myth was used in an imperial framework; significantly, Alexander the Great was included in an Amazonian narrative shortly after his death; writers like Quintus Curcius invented and emphasized an encounter between the Emperor and the Amazonian Queen, Thalestris. Amazons were also useful for Romans to show how peripheral ethnic groups were subdued under their power; former fierce warriors were endowed with sexual characteristics, tamed and controlled. Marriage of soldiers, representatives of a central masculinity, with peripheral women at the border of the Empire was common, and the myth of the Amazons was also useful in this context. All those ideas also included an Oriental connotation after the defeat of a clearly defined model of femininity opposed to Roman power: Cleopatra. At the same time, the myth was evolving in the Hellenistic world, taking some characteristics we will find in medieval Amazons.<sup>10</sup>

## Amazons in Early Medieval Spanish Literature: Saint Isidore of Seville, *Summae* and Travel Literature

The myth of the Amazons was firmly rooted in late Roman Spain, and its narrative was perpetuated in medieval times. Early Christian scholar Saint Isidore of Seville, above all, repeated Hellenistic and Latin topics on the myth in his famous *Etymologiae* (ca. 600–625):

Limes est Persicus, qui Scythas ab eis dividit, Scythia cognominatus, a quo limite Scythae a quibusdam perhibentur vocati, gens antiquissima semper habita. Hi Parthos Bactrianosque; feminae autem eorum Amazonum regna condiderunt. Massagetae ex Scytharum origine sunt. Et dicti Massagetae quasi graves, id est fortes Getae. Nam sic Livius argentum grave dicit, id est massas. Hi sunt, qui inter Scythas atque Albanos septentrionalibus locis inhabitant. Amazones dictae sunt, seu quod simul viverent sine viris, quasi AMA ZON, sive quod adustis dexterioribus mammis essent, ne sagittarum iactus inpediretur, quasi ANEU MAZON. Nudabant enim quam adusserant mammam. Has Titianus Vnimammas dicit. Nam

<sup>10</sup> Erin W Leal, "The Empire's Muse: Roman Interpretations of the Amazons through Literature and Art," M.A. thesis, San Diego State University, 2010; Pseudo-Callisthenes, *Vida y hazañas de Alejandro de Macedonia*, ed. Carlos García Gual (Madrid: Gredos, 1977).

hoc est Amazon, quasi ANEU MAZOU, id est sine mamma. Has iam non esse, quod earum partim ab Hercule, partim ab Achille vel Alexandro usque ad internicionem deletae sunt. In partes Asiaticae Scythiae gentes, quae posteros se Iasonis credunt, albo crine nascuntur ab adsiduis nivibus; et ipsius capilli color genti nomen dedit. Et inde dicuntur Albani. Horum glauca oculis, id est picta, inest pupilla, adeo ut nocte plus quam die cernant. Albani autem vicini Amazonum fuerunt.<sup>11</sup>

[The Persian boundary, which divides the Scythians from them, is named Scythia, and the Scythians are regarded by some people as having been named from that boundary – a nation always held to be very ancient. They were ancestors of the Parthians and Bactrians; further, Scythian women founded the kingdom of the Amazons. The Massagetes are of Scythian origin, and they are called Massagetes because they are “weighty,” that is, “strong” Getae – for Livy speaks of silver as weighty, that is, as “masses” (cf. massa, “mass”). They live in northern regions between the Scythians and the Albanians. The Amazons are so called either because they live together without men, as if the word were ἀμαζών (‘living together’), or because they had their right breasts burnt off so that their shooting of arrows would not be hindered, as if it were ἄνευ μαστῶν (‘without breasts’). Indeed, they would expose the breast that they had burned off. Titianus calls them “One-Breasted” (Unimammae), for that is ‘Amazon,’ as if the term were ἄνευ μαστῶν that is, ‘without a breast’. Amazons no longer exist, because they were wiped out partly by Hercules and partly by Achilles or Alexander. The Scythian peoples in regions of Asia Minor, who believe that they are descendants of Jason, are born with white (albus) hair because of the incessant snow, and the color of their hair gave the nation its name – hence they are called Albanians. A blue-gray, that is, colored pupil is present in their eyes, so that they see better by night than by day. Also, the Albanians were neighbors of the Amazons.<sup>12</sup>]

The myth, the core of which was created in classical Greece, had become enriched with additional connotations: imperial characteristics and a strong link with the stories of Alexander. At the same time, Amazons formed an extremely narrowly defined cultural category with a diachronic continuity, easily traceable because of its name. Most recent monographs on Amazons tend to describe the category in porous terms, often being interchangeable with similar characters, such as *virgines bellatrices*, feminine warriors, or just female leaders in different cultures and historical periods.<sup>13</sup> The myth had been an extremely powerful creation, and can be interpreted even as the epitome of imagination

<sup>11</sup> Saint Isidore of Seville, *Etimologie o Origini*, ed. Angelo Valastro Canale. 2 vols. (Turin: UTET, 2006), vol. I: 718.

<sup>12</sup> Saint Isidore of Seville, *The Etymologies of Isidore of Seville*, ed. Stephen A. Barney, W. J. Lewis, J. A. Beach, and Oliver Berghof (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 195.

<sup>13</sup> Adrienne Mayor, *The Amazons: Lives and Legends of Warrior Women across the Ancient World* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2014); see also Patrick J. Geary, *Women at the*

and fantasy, because of its aforementioned function to invert social reality. Amazons are Others not only in ethnic or gender terms, but a whole reversed cultural structure was even created in close relationship to them.<sup>14</sup> Considering medieval cosmovision, the city of Jerusalem occupies the geographical and symbolic center of the known world, while monsters and unknown races, such as the Amazons, are located on the margins.<sup>15</sup>

The core of the Amazonian myth is the inversion of the cultural roles related to gender, and consequently Amazons form an intermediate physical and symbolic space between humanity and monstrosity, due to their categorization as a “race,” alongside other peoples such as gymnosophists, cynocephalus or pygmies. Amazons are not exactly “monsters,” but they belong to the same aberrant humanity opposed to civilization; interestingly, this means that they can be tacitly included in the common origin of mankind. The medieval world tried to establish parameters to articulate certain rational patterns in the Genesis narrative, such as the impossibility of a humanity alien to Noah’s descendants after the great universal deluge. We also must bear in mind that all things monstrous necessarily belong to nature, and so, to its divine order.<sup>16</sup>

Amazons don’t appear explicitly in the travel narrative by Marco Polo, but the Venetian includes in his account vivid descriptions of a feminine island (“Feminea,” separated from a masculine one, “Masculina”), and he mentions bizarre, aberrant sexual behavior at the periphery of the world, instead.<sup>17</sup> Polo and another extremely popular medieval travel book, John Mandeville’s *Travels*, were

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*Beginning; Origin Myths from the Amazons to the Virgin Mary* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006).

**14** Albrecht Classen, in his introductory chapter, “Imagination, Fantasy, Otherness and Monstrosity in the Middle Ages and Early Modern World ...,” emphasizes the idea of fantasy in contrast to the real.

**15** Paul Zumthor, *La Mesure du monde: Représentation de l’espace au Moyen Âge* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1993), 222–24. Claude Kappler, *Monstres, démons et merveilles à la fin du Moyen Âge* (Paris: Payot, 1980), 24.

**16** Santiago López Ríos, *Salvajes y razas monstruosas en la literatura medieval castellana*, (Madrid: Fundación Universitaria Española, 1999), 20, 125; Vladimir Acosta, *La humanidad prodigiosa: el imaginario antropológico medieval*. 2 vols. (Caracas: Monte Ávila Editores, 1996), vol. II: 291; Claude Lecouteux, *Les Monstres dans la pensée médiévale européenne* (Paris: L’Université de Paris-Sorbonne, 1995), 10. See also the contribution to this volume by Siegfried Christoph.

**17** Marco Polo, *El libro de Marco Polo (ejemplar anotado por Cristóbal Colón que se conserva en la Biblioteca Capitulare y Colombina de Sevilla)*, ed. Juan Gil (Madrid: Ediciones Padrón, 1986), 300, 380–82.



already known and translated in Spain at the end of the fourteenth century.<sup>18</sup> According to Mandeville's account, Amazons live on "the lond of Femynye," that is, "an ile alle envirouned with the see saf in ii. places where ben ii. Entrees."<sup>19</sup> We must be aware that Marco Polo's approach to monsters (and specifically Amazons) is much more skeptical than Mandeville's.<sup>20</sup> Similar ideas about mysterious islands appear in the fictitious *Libro del conosçimiento de todos los rregnos et tierra et señorios que son por el mundo, et de las señales et armas que han* (ca. 1350–1376).<sup>21</sup> Finally, Ruy González de Clavijo's *Embajada a Tamorlán* (ca. 1454), based on a real expedition to Central Asia, describes the land populated by Amazons; Clavijo emphasizes that they are the same group that participated in the war of Troy.<sup>22</sup> In conclusion, Amazons appear in general and Spanish medieval travel literature in connection with vague ideas about feminine islands in the Oriental limit of the world, sharing their symbolic and geographical space with monsters and imaginary creatures, such as sciapods and pygmies; in opposition, mankind inhabits the center of the known world. Even when Amazons were not considered "monsters," they formed an intermediate category between humanity and monstrosity. As a result of this conception, Amazons were considered to be descendants of Adam and Noah, and they were set in universal history.<sup>23</sup>

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**18** Mandeville and Marco Polo were popular and well known in Spain, being read in Latin or in romance translations. See Juan Gil, *La India y el Catay: Textos de la Antigüedad clásica y del Medioevo occidental* (Madrid: Alianza, 1995); María Mercedes Rodríguez Temperley, *Estudio preliminar. Libro de las maravillas del mundo*, by Juan de Mandevilla (Buenos Aires, Argentina: SECIT, 2005); Estela Pérez Bosch, "Los viajes de Juan de Mandeville o el mercado del conocimiento," *Maravillas, peregrinaciones y utopías: literatura de viajes en el mundo románico*, ed. Rafael Beltrán (Valencia, Spain: Universitat de València, 2002), 315–23; Pilar Liria Montañés, Introducción. *Libro de las maravillas del mundo*, by Juan de Mandevilla (Zaragoza: Caja de Ahorros de Zaragoza, 1979), 13–33.

**19** Jean de Mandeville, *Mandeville's Travels*, ed. M. C. Seymour (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1967), 114.

**20** Albrecht Classen, "The Epistemological Function of Monsters in the Middle Ages," *Lo Sguardo, Rivista di Filosofia* 9.2 (2012): 13–34; here 29–30; online at: [https://www.academia.edu/6744378/The\\_Epistemological\\_Function\\_of\\_Monsters\\_in\\_the\\_Middle\\_Ages\\_From\\_The\\_Voyage\\_of\\_Saint\\_Brendan\\_to\\_Herzog\\_Ernst\\_Marie\\_de\\_France\\_Marco\\_Polo\\_and\\_John\\_Mandeville\\_What\\_Would\\_We\\_Be\\_Without\\_Monsters\\_in\\_Past\\_and\\_Present](https://www.academia.edu/6744378/The_Epistemological_Function_of_Monsters_in_the_Middle_Ages_From_The_Voyage_of_Saint_Brendan_to_Herzog_Ernst_Marie_de_France_Marco_Polo_and_John_Mandeville_What_Would_We_Be_Without_Monsters_in_Past_and_Present); last accessed on Nov. 11, 2019.

**21** *El libro del conosçimiento de todos los reinos* (*The Book of Knowledge of All Kingdoms*), ed. Nancy F Marino (Tempe, AZ: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 1999).

**22** Ruy González de Clavijo, *Embajada a Tamorlán*, ed. Francisco López Estrada (Madrid: Castalia, 1999), 194.

**23** Victoria Cirlot, "La estética de los monstruos en la Edad Media," *Revista de Literatura Medieval* 2 (1990): 175–182; Claude Lecouteux, *Les Monstres dans la pensée médiévale européenne* (see note 16); Martín Casanova Alameda, "Los monstruos en el pensamiento medieval europeo,"

The formation of the group of feminine warriors is described in *Historiae* and *summae*, as well as their relationship with Goths, their involvement in the war of Troy and the encounter with Alexander the Great. Different, individualized queens appear in chronological order: Hippolyta, Penthesilea and Thalestris. Rodrigo Jiménez de Rada and Juan Fernández de Heredia focus on a brief, but comprehensive Amazonian story in close relationship with Goths, Scythians and classical heroes; in their texts we find familiar elements, such as the violent origin of the group or the ablation of the left breast. These narratives emphasize the military potential of the feminine warriors and their untamed nature, but they are discovered unnoticed and easily defeated; their process of feminization, to be discussed, has begun. However, these texts tend to give relevance to the continuity of the group after these events.<sup>24</sup> Alfonso X of Castile provides a comprehensive history of the group: its origin and etymology, its links with classical heroes and the participation of the Amazons in the war of Troy and the encounter with Alexander the Great. Alfonso X concentrates all the information on the feminine warriors, merging archaic, classical, Hellenistic, Roman and proper medieval elements. Amazons create a matrilocal society after their husbands were killed, being able to avenge them. After that, the text presents the Amazons with their already known connections: Heracles, Theseus and Troy.<sup>25</sup> In conclusion, Alfonso systematizes all the information about the myth ordered in sequences with a rational spirit, thus providing a historically consequent pattern. Interestingly, Amazons appear in connection with a relevant ethnic group in symbolic and historical terms: Visigoths. Amazons marry them, becoming their wives and the ancestors of Spaniards.

Trojan material was widely disseminated in medieval Europe in different forms, and legends regarding that topic begin to appear in Spain in the eleventh century. Leomarte composed his *Sumas de historia troyana* around 1400 using different sources, like Alfonso X, and elements we already know: The story begins before the war of Troy, repeating the primal chronological horizon associated with the group, and the genesis of the Amazonian group is described

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*Santes Creus: revista de l'arxiu bibliogràfic* 19.0 (2002): 35–50. As to the differentiation between traditional, horrifying monsters and monstrous individuals that do not create fear at all, see also the contribution to this volume by Siegfried Christoph.

<sup>24</sup> Roderici Ximenii de Rada (Rodrigo Jiménez de Rada). *Opera Omnia pars I: Historia de rebus Hispaniae sive historia gothica*, ed. Juan Fernández Valverde (Turnhout: Brepols, 1987), 27–29. Juan Fernández de Heredia. *La grant crónica de Espanya, libros I–II*, ed. Regina af Geijerstam (Uppsala, Sweden: Almqvist & Wiksells, 1964), 201–02.

<sup>25</sup> Alfonso X, *General estoria*, ed. Belén Almeida (Madrid: Biblioteca Castro, 2009); Alfonso X. *Primera crónica general. Estoria de España que mandó componer Alfonso el Sabio y que se continuaba bajo Sancho IV en 1289*, ed. Ramón Menéndez Pidal (Madrid: Bailly-Bailliere, 1906).

after a battle in which Goth men die, and Hercules and Theseus fight against the feminine warriors after that. The Amazons appear in Troy in combination with exotic *sagittarii*, and they strengthen the morale of the besieged. The end is a cruel one for the queen Penthesilea, as she is defeated, being her corpse desecrated recalling the traditional topic of the Hector's death. Hence, the narrative takes a traditional motive of the classical myth, applying it to the Amazonian leader and emphasizing her absolute defeat. Finally, some fantastic and narrative elements in the text anticipate the feminization of the Amazons in the late Middle Age.<sup>26</sup>

Pedro de Chinchilla returns to the Amazonian theme in his *Libro de la Historia Troyana* (ca. 1443). Its main source is Guido delle Colonne's *Historia Destructionis Troiae*; the Italian author was considered the main authority on the subject, and Chinchilla's text is a slightly modified translation into Spanish of the original version. Amazons live on an island, along with men with whom they have offspring. In accordance with the evolution of the myth, gallant elements appear soon enough. For example, Amazonian combat attire combines the social ideals of a knight, a lady, and a maiden; the appearance of these aesthetic narrative elements is especially interesting because it reinforces the idea of combative fierceness. However, the issue of gender inferiority appears in an explicit way, and we notice a slight individualization of some individual characters. Finally, after the death of Penthesilea, her body is torn apart, although the treatment is not as explicit as the one in Leomarte's *Sumas*. The rest of the Amazons are demoralized, but they desire revenge, showing their feelings, inextricably linked to their feminine nature.<sup>27</sup>

Increasingly feminized Amazons and Alexander the Great are going to appear together in the Spanish *Libro d'Alixandre* (1170–1250),<sup>28</sup> mostly based on Germanic sources.<sup>29</sup> The Amazon queen, Talestris, is already described using

<sup>26</sup> Agapito Rey, ed., "Sumas de historia troyana atribuidas a Leomarte," *Anejos de Revista de filología española* XV (1932): 130–255.

<sup>27</sup> Pedro de Chinchilla. *Libro de la historia troyana*, ed. María Dolores Peláez Benítez (Madrid: Editorial Complutense, 1998), 311–15.

<sup>28</sup> *Libro de Alixandre*, ed. Dana Arthur Nelson (Madrid: Gredos, 1979); Albrecht Classen, in his introductory essay to this volume, "Imagination, Fantasy, Otherness and Monstrosity in the Middle Ages and Early Modern World," highlights the popularity of the Alexander romances throughout the entire Middle Ages and its continuous references to monsters located in the Eastern limits of the world.

<sup>29</sup> Ian Michael. *The Treatment of Classical Material in the Libro de Alexandre*, (Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 1970); see also Tobias Brandenberger. "El episodio amazónico del *Libro de Alexandre*. Fondo, fuentes, figuración," *Zeitschrift für romanische Philologie* 110 (1994): 432–66.

parameters of feminine beauty. This representation of the Amazons is a substantial contribution, while the rest of elements surrounding the Amazon are typically masculine. The new contextualization is relevant, because it emphasizes the femininity of the Amazon through her physical aspect, establishing new categories in the analysis of the category; the description fits well with the model of exaltation of the beauty, similar to the *descriptio puellae* model. The emphasis is remarkable in the treatment of the candor transmitted by some parts of the body of the feminine warrior. The depiction of Talestris contains similarities to those of Saint Mary of Egypt in a narrative context involving medievalization of characters like Alexander the Great, although with some Oriental nuances. Interestingly, the text depicts the face of the Amazon after a description of her body, according to a pattern used to describe men, and includes some masculine details, such as a goshawk. In addition, some verses seem to refer to a masculine ideal of beauty, and the author omits the description of Talestris's hair. Hence, the feminization of the Amazon is remarkable, appearing at the same time some explicit masculine elements, and the queen is placed in a female sphere, familiar for the reader. The implicit purpose of the passage could have been to enhance Alexander's image, the only man whom Talestris considers worth her attention, and this version of the encounter between the conqueror and the Amazon is extremely depoliticized, with a misogynist rhetoric that accentuates the physical beauty of Talestris and focusing on the fascination that Alexander provokes on her. It is, in summary, the first feminization of an Amazonian queen in Spanish literature according to the cultural parameters of the time; although being far from complete, it is extremely relevant. Talestris appears abruptly, and shortly after that there is a brief description of Amazonian society. Despite some references to the masculinity of the group, feminine elements prevail, such as the comparison of Talestris with the moon. During the Alexander's reception, the queen implores him to have a son together; hence, some erotic elements are introduced for the first time in the narrative.<sup>30</sup>

The literary role of the myth undergoes a significant change in the Late Middle Age: In combination with other processes such as those aforementioned in the framework of European cultural changes, Amazons acquired strong (and, sometimes, contradictory) connotations as they became courteous, feminist, feminine, and passive characters, while a process of individualization of some characters (especially Penthesilea) is consolidated. Despite the relevance of

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<sup>30</sup> *Libro de Alixandre* (see note 28), 578–84.

Christine de Pizan and Boccaccio in that process, some of these elements were already present in the *Roman d'Eneas* (1160) and the *Roman de Troie* (1170).<sup>31</sup>

## Amazons in Late Medieval Sentimental Literature

Giovanni Boccaccio's extremely influential works and specifically his narrative regarding the Amazons in *De mulieribus claris* had a great impact on some Spanish texts and, to be sure, no Italian author was more popular.<sup>32</sup> His relationship with women and the conception of femininity is highly contradictory, however, as his feminine characters are usually highly sophisticated and they don't fit into traditional categories. Some of Boccaccio's feminine characters are described in a negative way, but, interestingly, Amazons always have positive connotations.<sup>33</sup> The first Catalan *Decameron* was translated in 1429; perhaps the first Castilian version of Boccaccio's texts was *De casibus virorum illustrium*, completed under the patronage of Pero López de Ayala. Although the Spanish translations lacked quality, the impact of Boccaccio's work was extraordinary, and his influence continued through the sixteenth century. Boccaccio composed his *Teseida delle nozze d'Emilia* between 1339 and 1341. It is the first large-scale medieval literary work in which Amazons play a leading role in the narrative, centered on the story of Theseus and Hippolyta. Many aesthetic and literary elements are directly borrowed from classical sources, such as the prominence of Hippolyta, and not Penthesilea or Talestris, both more popular in medieval times. The work describes the invasion of Amazonian land by Theseus and the Greeks, his marriage with Hippolyta, and a love triangle between her sister, Emilia, and two Theban warriors; both marry her consecutively, and they fight for the love of the Amazon. The story of Theseus and Hippolyta repeats already

31 María del Carmen Marín Pina. "Aproximación al tema de la 'Virgo bellatrix' en los libros de caballerías españoles," *Criticón* 45 (1989): 81–94; here 84.

32 Martín de Riquer. "Boccaccio en la literatura catalana medieval," *Filología Moderna* 55 (junio 1975): 451–71; here 452, 459; Joaquín Arce. "Boccaccio nella letteratura castigliana: panorama generale e rassegna bibliografico-critica." *Atti del convegno internazionale "La fortuna del Boccaccio nelle culture e nelle letterature nazionali. Firenze-Certaldo, 22–25 maggio 1975,"* ed. Francesco Mazzoni (Florence: Olschki, 1978), 64–69.

33 Elsa Filosa. *Tre Studi sul De Mulieribus Claris*, (Milan: Edizioni Universitarie di Lettere Economia Diritto, 2012); Félix Fernández Murga. "El canceller Ayala, traductor de Boccaccio," *Estudios Románicos dedicados al profesor Soria*, vol. 1 (Granada, Spain: Universidad de Granada, 1985), 313–24.

known parameters, like the invasion of Amazonian land by the Greeks or references to Alexander the Great, but the plot including Emilia and her two suitors is a new and interesting one. The work ends with a standardized happy ending: a double marriage. Amazons are redeemed and defeated symbolically, in a stark contrast to the cruel treatment provided to them in medieval texts involving the war of Troy.

In conclusion, the story ends with the Amazons in the correct cultural framework, regardless of their aberrant origin. Some details in the narrative document the accelerated process of Amazonian feminization as they almost became feminine standard characters in the cultural context of courtly literature: Hippolyta and Emilia often give expression to their feelings, usually in passages with a high aesthetic component. However, Amazons deny her sentimental femininity, reminding us about their inner contradictions. Being maidens, they have a strong connection with Diana, establishing a direct link between virginity and Amazonian nature, reinforced in a Christian context. In summary, Boccaccio's *Teseida* presents an Amazonian narrative already exceeding medieval topics: The conflict is no longer a real war, but the disputed games of seduction and love. Interestingly, Hippolyta, shortly after the invasion starts, talks about Greeks being at war against Cupid.<sup>34</sup>

Christine de Pizan's *Le Livre de la Cité des Dames* (1405) displays feminine social models, in line with Saint Augustine of Hippo's *Civitas Dei*, and partially inspired by Boccaccio's *De mulieribus Claris*. Its sources are rich and heterogeneous, including religious literature. Christine de Pizan's work can be contextualized within the framework of feminine affirmation in response to misogynistic trends initiated by Jean de Meun; the social relevance of the author is important, since her work was read and disseminated by several European queens. The Amazonian description begins with the issues already known: the location of their land in Scythia and the loss of the men in the ethnic group. The narrative emphasizes the relevance of motherhood and reinforces the elements of feminine self-affirmation, reaching a political and imperialist level: The mighty Amazonian wrath is not only protective, but expansive. Christine's narrative includes the marriage between Theseus and Hippolyta, does not conclude with the defeat of the feminine warriors, and obviously omits the story of Fedra; also, chivalrous ideals appear in an extremely sophisticated way. Christine concedes the death of Penthesilea, although she defeats her enemy before that,

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<sup>34</sup> Giovanni Boccaccio. *Tutte le Opere di Giovanni Boccaccio*. A cura de Vittore Branca. 12 vols, ed. Alberto Limentani (Milan: Arnoldo Mondadori, 1964), vol. II, 262, 291–92, 309–10, 325, 355, 483, 635–36, 640.

and no importance is given to Alexander, presented as a secondary character. The text presents a complete narrative with the characteristics of internal coherence already seen in some medieval texts: A set of Amazonian queens is presented, as well as their families. Hence, we have a huge number of individualized Amazons, with a unique personality, responsible for different achievements and being protagonists of different stories.<sup>35</sup>

The model of a sentimental Amazon, in connection with a feminist theme and chivalric values, permeated relevant social circles in a dynamic intensified in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries: These Amazonian characters appear in Juan Rodríguez del Padrón's *Triunfo de las donas* (1443), Diego de Valera's *Defensa de virtuosas mugeres* (ca. 1440), and Diego de San Pedro's *Cárcel de amor* (1492). Álvaro de Luna replicates the model with no remarkable additions in his *Libro de las virtuosas e claras mugeres*, written in the Castilian court around 1446, and mostly based on Boccaccio's works.<sup>36</sup> Here Amazons evolve toward affectionate characters in sentimental literature, and maybe the most remarkable late medieval composition in Spanish literature about Amazons was composed by Juan Rodríguez del Padrón who wrote a poem depicting a Penthesilea who suffers because of the death of a beloved man: *El planto que fizo la Pantasilea* (ca. 1440).<sup>37</sup>

The sentimental Amazon had a powerful influence on the stereotype on modern chivalric romance, the pagan Amazon prone to conversion to Christianity: "The conversión of the Amazons in the *Amadís cycle* expresses an idealized conception of the proper relationship between the barbarian 'other' and the subject of Western discourse, the white European male. Through the persuasion of patience, good example, and reason, these barbarian queens give up not only their religion but also their culture: they embrace and submit to the patriarchal institutions of Church and patrilineal monogamy. Such was the ideal to which aspired both the defenders of the Indians, such as Bartolomé de las Casas, and the papal and Spanish royal policymakers. They believed that, on hearing the Gospel and seeing the good example of those who brought God's word, the Indians would

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35 Christine de Pizan, *Le Livre de la Cité des Dames*, ed. Érick Hicks et Thérèse Moreau (Paris: Stock, 1986); Tobias Brandenberger. "Christine de Pizan em Portugal: As Traducções do Livro des Trois Vertus," *Actas do Quinto Congresso, Associação Internacional de Lusistas, Universidade de Oxford, 1 a 8 de Setembro de 1996*, ed. Thomas F Earle (Oxford: Associação Internacional de Lusistas, 1998), 423–449; here 424–25.

36 Álvaro de Luna. *Libro de las virtuosas e claras mugeres*, ed. Julio Vélez-Sáinz (Madrid: Cátedra, 2009), 386, 388.

37 See Olga Tudorica Impey, "El planto de una amazona sentimental: Pantasilea llorando a Pantasilea," *Revista de Literatura Medieval* 7 (1995): 137–58; see also Guillermo Serés, "La elegía de Juan Rodríguez del Padrón," *Hispanic Review* 62.1 (Winter 1994): 1–22.

readily give up not only their idolatry but also their cultural practices and embrace Christianity and European civilization. According to this logic, the only good Indian, like the only good Amazon, was a converted one.”<sup>38</sup>

## American Amazons

As is well known, Columbus was heavily influenced by his readings of Marco Polo and medieval travel literature,<sup>39</sup> and Amazons were a part of American mythology since his first voyage.<sup>40</sup> Shortly after that and having already information about the new World and some Columbian ideas about it, Garci Rodríguez de Montalbo wrote *Amadis of Gaul* and *Las Sergas de Esplandián*, the first modern Spanish chivalric romances, where exotic Amazons, living in the island of California and led by their queen Calafia, are prone to fight against Christians,<sup>41</sup> but eventually they are symbolically defeated by those men and finally incorporated into their community:

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**38** Alison Taufer, “The Only Good Amazon is a Converted Amazon: The Woman Warrior and Christianity in the Amadis Circle,” *Playing with Gender: A Renaissance Pursuit*, ed. Jean R. Brink, Maryanne C. Horowitz, and Allison P. Coudert (Urbana, IL, and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1991), 48; see also Judith A. Whitenack, “Conversion to Christianity in the Spanish Romance of Chivalry, 1490–1524,” *Journal of Hispanic Philology* 13.1 (1998): 13–39.

**39** Chris Zacher. “How Columbus Read Mandeville’s Travels,” *Actas del Primer Encuentro Internacional Colombino*, ed. Consuelo Varela (Madrid: Sociedad Estatal Quinto Centenario, 1990).

**40** Christopher Columbus, *Carta fechada el 4 de marzo de 1493*, en *Libro copiado de Cristóbal Colón que contiene siete cartas-relación de sus cuatro viajes y dos cartas que pueden considerarse de carácter íntimo, escritas a los Reyes Católicos entre 4 de marzo de 1493 y 7 de julio de 1503* – Archivo General de Indias, Patronato, 296B, ramo 1: “Por ende, es rrazon que V[uestras] Al[tezas] sepa[n] que la prima isla de las Yndias mas llegadas d’España es toda poblada de mujeres sin ningún hombre, y su trato no es feminil, salvo usar armas y otros exerçios de hombre. Traen arcos y flechas y se adornan de lasminas de alambre, del qual metal tienen en mui grande cantidad. A esta isla llaman Matenino” (Wherefore Your Highnesses should know that the first island of the Indies, closest to Spain, is populated entirely by women, without a single man, and their behavior is not feminine; they rather use weapons and practice other masculine activities. They carry bows and arrows and take their adornments from the copper mines, and they have this metal in large quantity. They call this island Matenino.)

**41** Dora B. Polk, *The Island of California. A History of a Myth* (Spokane, WA: The Arthur H. Clark Company, 1991), 127: “The Christian conception of the Infidel, the Spanish conception of the marauding Moors, and stories of New-World cannibals, seem to merge in queen Calafia’s ladies.”



Sabed que a la diestra mano de las Indias ovo una isla llamada California mucho llegada a la parte del Paraíso terrenal, la cual fue poblada con mujeres negras sin que algún varón entre ellas oviesse, que casi como las amazonas era su estilo de vivir; estas eran de valientes cuerpos y esforçados y ardientes coraçones, y de grandes fuerças. La ínsola en sí, la más fuerte de riscos y bravas peñas que en el mundo se fallava. Las sus armas eran todas de oro, y también las guarniciones de las bestias fieras en que, después de las aver amansado, cavalgavan; que en toda la isla no avía otro metal alguno. Moravan en cuevas muy bien labradas. Tenían navíos muchos en que salían a otras partes a hazer sus cabalgadas.<sup>42</sup>

[Know, then, that, on the right hand of the Indies, there is an island called California, very close to the side of the Terrestrial Paradise, and it was peopled by black women, without any man among them, for they lived in the fashion of Amazons. They were of strong and hardy bodies, of ardent courage and great force. Their island was the strongest in all the world, with its steep cliffs and rocky shores. Their arms were all of gold, and so was the harness of the wild beasts which they tamed and rode. For, in the whole island, there was no metal but gold. They lived in caves wrought out of the rock with much labor. They had many ships with which they sailed out to other countries to obtain booty.<sup>43</sup>]

Pues al tiempo que aquellos grandes hombres de los paganos partieron con aquellas tan grandes flotas como la historia vos ha contado, reinaba en aquella isla California una reina muy grande de cuerpo, muy hermosa para entre ellas, en floreciente edad, desseosa en su pensamiento de acabar grandes cosas, valiente en esfuerço y ardid del su bravo coraçón más que otra ninguna de las que antes della aquel señorío mandaron. E oyendo decir cómo toda la mayor parte del mundo se movía en aquel viaje contra los christianos, no sabiendo ella qué cosa eran christianos, ni teniendo noticias de otras tierras, sino aquellas que sus vezinas estaban, deseando ver el mundo y sus dive[r]sas generaciones, pensando que, con la gran fortaleza suya y de las suyas, que de todo lo que se ganasse avría por fuerça o por grado la mayor parte, habló con todas aquellas que en guerra diestras estaban que sería bueno que entrando en sus grandes flotas siguiesen aquel viaje que aquellos grandes príncipes y altos hombres seguían, animándolas, esforçándolas, poniéndoles delante las grandes honras y provechos que de tal camino seguirseles podrían, y sobre todo la gran fama que por todo el mundo dellassería sonada; que estando assí en aquella isla, haziendo no otra cosa sino lo que sus antecessoras fizieron, no era sino estar como sepultadas en vida, como muertas biviendo, passando sus días sin fama, sin gloria, como las animalias brutas fazían. Tantas cosas les dixo aquella muy esforçada reina Calafia que no solamente movió a sus gentes a consentir en el tal camino, mas ellas, con mayor desseo que sus famas por muchas partes divulgadas fuesen, le davan priessa que entrasse en la mar luego porque se hallasen en las afrentas juntas con aquellos tan grandes hombres.<sup>44</sup>

42 Garcí Rodríguez de Montalvo, *Las Sergas de Esplandián*, ed. Carlos Sáinz de la Maza (Madrid: Castalia, 2003), 727.

43 Garcí Rodríguez de Montalvo, *Las Sergas de Esplandián*. English translation by Edward Everett Hale, *His Level Best, and Other Stories* (Boston, MA: Roberts, 1885), 245–46.

44 Garcí Rodríguez de Montalvo, *Las Sergas de Esplandián* (see note 42), 727–28.

[Now, at the time when those great men of the Pagans sailed with their great fleets, as the history has told you, there reigned in this island of California a Queen, very large in person, the most beautiful of all of them, of blooming years, and in her thoughts desirous of achieving great things, strong of limb, and of great courage, more than any of those who had filled her throne before her. She heard tell that all the greater part of the world was moving in this onslaught against the Christians. She did not know what Christians were; for she had no knowledge of any parts of the world excepting those which were close to her. But she desired to see the world and its various people; and thinking, that, with the great strength of herself and of her women, she should have the greater part of their plunder, either from her rank or from her prowess, she began to talk with all of those who were most skilled in war, and told them that it would be well, if, sailing in their great fleets, they also entered on this expedition, in which all these great princes and lords were embarking. She animated and excited them, showing them the great profits and honors which they would gain in this enterprise, – above all, the great fame which would be theirs in all the world; while, if they stayed in their island, doing nothing but what their grandmothers did, they were really buried alive, – they were dead while they lived, passing their days without fame and without glory, as did the very brutes. So much did this mighty Queen, Calafia, say to her people, that she not only moved them to consent to this enterprise, but they were so eager to extend their fame through other lands that they begged her to hasten to sea, so that they might earn all these honors, in alliance with such great men.<sup>45]</sup>

As chivalric romances proliferated extraordinarily during the sixteenth century, Amazons were degraded, becoming a paradigm of the married woman in Pedro de Luján's *Silves de la Selva*.<sup>46</sup> Generally men entice women to Christian marriage, and Amazonian characters in later chivalric romances repeated this model, being symbolically and culturally defeated.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> Garci Rodríguez de Montalvo, *Las Sergas de Esplandián*. English translation by Edward Everett Hale, *His Level Best* (see note 43), 247–48.

<sup>46</sup> See María Isabel Romero Tabares, *La mujer casada y la amazona: un modelo renacentista en la obra de Pedro de Luján*, (Sevilla, Spain: Secretariado de Publicaciones de la Universidad de Sevilla, 1998).

<sup>47</sup> Pedro de Luján, *Don Silves de la Selva – Comiêca la dozena parte del inuencible cauallero Amadis de Gaula: bque tracta de los grandes hechos en Armas del esforçado Cauallero d' n Silues de la Selua con el fin de las guerras Ruxianas: iunto con el nacimieto de los temidos caualleros Esferamüdi y Amadis de Astra: y assi mismo de los dos esforçados principes Fortunian y Astrapolo* – Sevilla, Domenico de Robertis, 1549 – Biblioteca Nacional de España, R/9031; Feliciano de Silva, *Lisuarte de Grecia – El septimo libro de amadis en el que se trata de los grandes fechos en armas de Lisuarte de Grecia fijo de esplandiã y de Periõ de Gaula [Agora segunda vez impresso]* – Sevilla, Jacobo y Juan Cromberger, 1525 – Biblioteca Nacional de España, U/8571(1); Feliciano de Silva, Silva, *Amadis de Grecia – El nono libro de Amadis de Gaula [texto impresso]: que es la cronica del muy valiente y esforçado principe y cauallero de la ardiente espada Amadis de Grecia, hijo de Lisuarte de grecia emperador de Constãtinopla y de Trapisonda, y rey de Rodas, que trata de los sus grandes hechos en armas y estraños amores* – Burgos, Juan de Junta, 1535 – Biblioteca Nacional de España, U/8571(2).

Extraordinarily boosted by a cultural circuit including imperial ideology, the use of the myth as a way to understand cultural difference, a classic revival in the context of European Renaissance, an extensive reading on medieval travel literature and early modern chivalric romances and a rigid, the filtering of certain Pre-Columbian narratives and the useful definition of a masculine center and a feminine periphery provided by the myth,<sup>48</sup> Amazons are going to be discovered everywhere in the New World. They had a heavy influence on its toponymy (California, Amazon River, etc.) and they played a prominent role in American and European popular culture: dances, tapestries, celebrations and costumes. Rationalism in the era of scientific expeditions, however, brought an end to the myth of the Amazons in America. Significantly, Friar Laureano de la Cruz writes in 1647 after a pastoral mission: “No escribo esta relación [sobre las amazonas] para que la crean todos, sino para que la crean mis superiors” (I do not write this report [about the Amazons] for all to be believed, but for it to be believed by my superiors).<sup>49</sup>

In conclusion, medieval Spain preserved the classical myth and projected this imaginary concept to the Americas, along with some of its most relevant connotations: imperial periphery, social inversion, and distorted femininity.

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**48** Stephen Greenblatt, *Marvelous Possessions: The Wonder of the New World* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2017), 23: “In most early European accounts of the New World we are dealing (...) with the imagination at work.” John Elliott, “Renaissance Europe and America: A Blunted Impact?,” *First Images of America: The Impact of the New World in the Old*, ed. Fredi Chiapelli, Michael J. B. Allen, and Robert L. Benson. 2 vols. (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1976), vol. I, 11–23; Jean Pierre Sanchez, “Le Mythe des Amazones du Nouveau Monde,” *Acta Columbina* 12 (1991): 54: “Le Nouveau Monde présentait, assurément, des conditions favorables à l’élaboration de la légende” (for sure, the New World presented favorable conditions for the elaboration of the legend); Anthony Pagden, *The Fall of Natural Man: The American Indian and the Origins of Comparative Ethnology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 2: “Observers in America, like observers of anything culturally unfamiliar for which there exist few readily available antecedents, had to be able to classify before they could properly see; and in order to classify in any meaningful sense they had no alternative but to appeal to a system which was already in use. It was indeed that system, not the innate structure of the world, that determined both what they actually believed to be the objective reality before them and the areas of it they selected for description”; see also Remedios Mataix Azuar, “Amazonas áureas: un viaje a América de ida y vuelta,” *Edad de oro* 29 (2010): 185–219; and Federico Fernández de Castillejo, *La ilusión en la conquista: génesis de los mitos y leyendas americanos* (Buenos Aires, Argentina: Atalaya, 1945).

**49** Laureano de la Cruz, *América en el Mar del Sur, llamada Imperio de los Reinos del Perú – Segunda parte de el tratado quinto. América austral. Capítulo primero* – Biblioteca Nacional de España, MSS/2950, 114r.



Sally Abed

## Wonders and Monsters in *The Travels of John Mandeville* and in Abu Hamid al-Gharnāti's *Tuhfat al-Albāb*

The common experience of travel across cultures simultaneously converges and diverges on issues of wonders and monsters, their definition, symbolism, meaning, and people's reaction to them. The travelers' treatment of wonders on the road reveals their cultural baggage and shapes their unique worldview. When examining wonders and monsters, my point of departure is to look at them comparatively within examples of prominent Western and Arab travel narratives concerned with wonders, such as Abu Hamid al-Gharnāti's twelfth-century *Tuhfat al-albāb wa Nukhbat al-I'jāb* (Gift of Secrets and Selection of Wonders) and John Mandeville's fourteenth-century *The Travels*.<sup>1</sup> As far as I can tell, such a comparison has not yet been endeavored in previous scholarship, although both writers have been the subject of intense scrutiny each on his own. It is this relationship between travel and wonders and the relevance of imagination in that case that I am going to investigate in this study.<sup>2</sup>

The concept of the marvelous and its association with monsters as a substantial category has been studied in medieval Western traditions, such as travel writing and maps.<sup>3</sup> There is no dearth in secondary literature on the topic, which includes prominent classic studies that theorize the term monster and

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<sup>1</sup> Abu Hamid al-Gharnāti, *Tuhfat al-albāb wa Nukhbat al-I'jāb* (Gift of Secrets and Selection of Wonders), ed. Ismail al-'Arabi (Abū Ḥaby, Morocco: Dar al-Afaq al-Jadida, 1993). All translations from the text are mine; and John Mandeville, *The Book of John Mandeville with Related Texts*, ed. and trans. Ian Macleod Higgins (Indianapolis, IN, and Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 2011).

<sup>2</sup> See the introduction by Albrecht Classen to this volume for a full discussion of imagination and fantasy.

<sup>3</sup> For monsters on Western maps, see Chet Van Duzer, *Sea Monsters on Medieval and Renaissance Maps* (London: The British Library, 2013).

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what it designates.<sup>4</sup> The study of the monstrous and the wondrous in the medieval Arab tradition is relatively more recent by comparison and looks at the topic in its entirety rather than within the context of travel writing.<sup>5</sup> Perhaps the most extensive study of wonders of creation in Arab and Persian cultures is *Wonder, Image, and Cosmos in Medieval Islam* by Persis Berlekamp, who rightly notes “an extreme imbalance in the scholarship on the European and Islamic traditions of wonder.”<sup>6</sup> It is worth noting here that unlike the Western tradition, in Arab studies there is no umbrella term for monsters and no comprehensive monster theory has been attempted so far. These works examine the issue of the marvelous in general terms or from an ethnographic angle rather than examine it within the context of travel writing or maps.<sup>7</sup> Furthermore, most Western and Arab studies of the topic examine particular facets of wonders in isolation since to date there has not been an in-depth comparative study of monstrosity and marvels in East and West.

But what is meant by wonders? The word ‘wonder’ is a modern word that signifies the strange, the unfamiliar, and the astonishing for people. In medieval Europe, the word most used for wonders was *mirabilia*. In medieval Arab culture, the word most used for wonders was ‘*aj’aib*, the plural of ‘*ajeib*. Both *mirabilia* and ‘*aj’aib* denoted whatever cannot be explained and yet was wondrous, be it monsters, strange places, architecture, natural phenomena, or customs and traditions, among other things since the canon of wonders was

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4 See, for example, John Block Friedman, *The Monstrous Races in Medieval Art and Thought* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1981); Lorraine Daston and Catherine Park, *Wonders and the Order of Nature, 1150–1750* (New York: Zone Books, 2001); Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, *Monster Theory: Reading Culture* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1996); and Joy Kenseth, *The Age of the Marvelous* (Hanover, NH: Hood Museum of Art, 1991). See also the contributions to the present volume by Daniel F. Pigg and Siegfried Christoph.

5 The following are article-length studies of the topic, such as Travis Zadeh, “The Wiles of Creation: Philosophy, Fiction, and the ‘Aja’ib Tradition,” *Middle Eastern Literatures* 13 (2010): 21–48; Kamal Abu-Deeb, “Introduction,” *The Imagination Unbound: Al-Adab al-‘Aja’ibi and the Literature of the Fantastic in the Arabic Tradition*, ed. Kamal Abu-Deeb (London: Saqi Books: Bilingual edition, 2007), 5–35; and Syrinx von Hees, “The Astonishing: A Critique of ‘Aja’ib Literature,” *Middle Eastern Literatures*, 8 (2010): 101–20. See also the various studies on monsters and strange animals by Remke Kruk, such as his “The Princess Maymuna: Maiden, Mother, Monster,” *Oriente Moderno* 83 (2003): 425–42.

6 Persis Berlekamp, *Wonder, Image, and Cosmos in Medieval Islam* (New Haven, CT, and London: Yale University Press, 2011), xi.

7 For the ethnographic dimension, see Alauddin Samarrai, “Beyond Belief and Reverence: Medieval Mythological Ethnography in the Near East and Europe,” *Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies* 23 (1993): 19–42.

“constantly shifting its contents.”<sup>8</sup> In general, wonders contradict, destabilize, give pleasure, and inspire fear. They are a prelude to divine contemplation and are connected to passions.<sup>9</sup>

A full discussion of the terms *mirabilia* and *‘aja’ib* coupled with the legacy of wonders comes later in this study the aim of which is to compare the treatment of Arab and Western cultures of the monstrous and the marvelous. Through this comparison, I examine the marvelous and the monstrous in each culture as travelers encounter the foreign on the road. Some of the crucial differences between both cultures I propose here are: 1) Arab travel accounts precede and give rise to the wonders of creation manuscripts, whereas in the Western tradition wonders of creation manuscripts help shape travel accounts. 2) Monsters and wonders are not necessarily located in geographic margins in the Arab tradition whereas in the Western tradition they “tended to cluster at the margins rather than at the center of the known world.”<sup>10</sup> 3) Monsters are of evil descent in the Western tradition whereas they are not necessarily of evil lineage in the Arab tradition, and 4) when the wondrous is encountered in Western accounts, the traveler shows limited agency and limited interaction with the wondrous as s/he tries to set him/herself apart from the strange. In Arab travel accounts, on the other hand, the individual exhibits more agency as s/he interacts more with the wondrous and becomes part of the phenomenon. Notably, wonders and monsters are more integral to Western travel writing and maps where the distinction between fact and fiction is not as crucial as it is in Arab travel writing where the distinction between both is clearly noticeable. The aversion toward mixing fact and fiction in Arab thought led to the existence of two strands of travel writing: the first are travel and geographic accounts that lean more toward the realistic, and the second are those which lean more toward the fantastic, which I am mostly concerned with here.

While it is impossible to look at the entire gamut of travel texts and maps in both cultures here, it is helpful to look at examples of the marvelous in popular works in Arab and Western literature. The best candidate in the Western tradition is John Mandeville’s fourteenth-century *The Travels*, a work that captivated the hearts of the medieval audience for centuries to come.<sup>11</sup> An equally captivating counterpart for the Arab medieval audience is Abu Hamid al-Gharnāṭī’s twelfth-century *Tuhfat al-albāb wa Nukhbat al-I’jāb* (Gift of Secrets and Selection of

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<sup>8</sup> Daston and Park, *Wonders and the Order of Nature* (see note 4), 17.

<sup>9</sup> Daston and Park, *Wonders and the Order of Nature* (see note 4), 11–16.

<sup>10</sup> Daston and Park, *Wonders and the Order of Nature* (see note 4), 14.

<sup>11</sup> John Mandeville, *The Book of John Mandeville* (see note 1).

Wonders).<sup>12</sup> Abu Hamid's work played a decisive role in carving out a space for wonders in travel works and in manuscripts solely dedicated to wonders. Mandeville's travels are mostly considered fictional, or at best semi-fictional since there is no agreement on whether he traveled at all or not. This uncertainty regarding his travels earned him the reputation of an arm-chair traveler who included endless marvels in his account. Abu Hamid's travels are conversely real and his fantastical material earned him much popularity among the medieval audience and among modern scholars alike. For both he was representative of a different type of travel literature that was entertaining in essence and yet also surprisingly and refreshingly realistic. He importantly became considered the founder of the *'aja'ib*/wonders tradition in Arabic literature, and his wonders influenced other medieval authors.<sup>13</sup> Though eastern and western audiences alike enjoyed both accounts for their inclusion of entertaining marvels, both were gradually dismissed as fictional and were not taken seriously enough until modern scholarship re-evaluated them. For example, Ibn 'Asakir accused Al-Gharnāti of being a liar despite the popularity of his text among medieval audience and at the caliphal court.<sup>14</sup> Owing to these similarities, the two texts are comparable counterparts worthy of being read together. But before turning to the two works in question, it is necessary to touch upon travel writing together with the legacy of marvels passed down to Arabs and Westerners alike to underscore the conversions and diversions in both traditions.

## Travel and the Legacy of Monsters and Wonders

Travel writing is a modern term in the European literary tradition that designates a specific branch of literature. However, I concur with Kim Phillips on the need to consider the suitability of the term for what we call medieval European travel accounts despite the fact that medieval European writers were not fully aware of producing and shaping the genre of travel literature.<sup>15</sup> In other words,

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<sup>12</sup> Abu Hamid al-Gharnāti, *Tuhfat al-albāb* (see note 1).

<sup>13</sup> See the introduction to the edition for Abu Hamid's popularity among the medieval audience, the wide circulation of his text and its influence on other medieval authors like al-Qazwini. Al-'Arabi, "Introduction," *Tufat al-Albāb* (see note 1), 10–14.

<sup>14</sup> Al-'Arabi, "Introduction," *Tufat al-Albāb* (see note 1), 17.

<sup>15</sup> Kim Phillips, *Before Orientalism: Asian Peoples and Cultures in European Travel Writing, 1245–1510* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014). See Phillips also for further discussion of the term within Western context, 50–69; here 50; and cf. Romedio Schmitz-Esser, "Travel and Exploration in the Middle Ages." *Handbook of Medieval Culture: Fundamental*



travel literature was not a recognized separate branch of literature by European authors. Conversely, medieval Arab writers were aware of producing and shaping the separate genre of travel literature/*adab al-rihlat* early on at a time when travel literature was becoming a recognized genre, especially from the ninth century onwards.<sup>16</sup> Ibn Hawqal's and al-Muqaddasi's discussion of the concept in their medieval works is a case in point.<sup>17</sup> In *Aḥsan al-Takāsim* (The Best of Divisions), al-Muqaddasi cites the Qur'anic verse that urges people to "roam around the earth" in order "to see," stressing that ... "[there are] advantages for those who travel."<sup>18</sup> Awareness of travel writing and its function is more explicit in Ibn Hawqal in *Sūrat al-'Ard* (The Picture of the Earth):

What prompted me to compose [the treatise] ... is that in my youth I was always passionate about reading books of itineraries (*kutub al masālik*), aspiring to the method of differentiating among lands (*mamālik*) in writings and in reality and distinguishing each from the other in terms of religious schools of thought and rules of conduct and determining their impact on ... customs, fields of learning, sciences, particularities, and generalities ...<sup>19</sup>

Whether medieval writers in the east and west referred to travel literature and were aware of shaping and following a particular genre or not, they incorporated wonders in their accounts. In addition to travel accounts, these wonders were also subject of illustrated manuscripts dedicated solely to listing wonders and, thus, known as wonders of creation manuscripts.

Although these wonders of creation manuscripts are not the same as manuscripts of geographies, "including those focused on geographical oddities, which were illustrated mainly with maps," I would argue that the two enjoyed a twin relationship in Arab culture that makes it almost impossible to refer to

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*Aspects and Conditions of the European Middle Ages*, ed. Albrecht Classen. Vol. 3 (Berlin and Boston: Walter de Gruyter, 2015), 1680–705.

**16** For a discussion of *adab al-rihalat* (the literature of travel) in the Arabic tradition, see Naser Abd el-Razek al-Muwafi, *al-rihla fi al-adab al-'Arabi* (The Journey in Arabic Literature) (Cairo: Cairo University Press, 1995), 38–47.

**17** Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad Shams al-Din al-Muqaddasi or al-Muqaddasi (ca. 945/946–991) was a medieval Arab geographer and author of *Aḥsan al-taqāsim fi ma'rifa al-aqālīm* (The Best Divisions in the Knowledge of the Regions). Ibn Hawqal (d. 988 C.E.) was a tenth-century Arab writer, geographer and traveler whose most famous work is *Surat al-'Ard* (Picture of the Earth).

**18** Shamsuddine al-Kilany, *Surat Uruba 'Inda al-'Arab fi-l-'Asr al-Wasit* (The Picture of Europe for the Arabs in the Middle Ages) (Damascus: Ministry of Culture, 2004).

**19** Ibn Hawqal, *Sūrat al-'Ard* (Beirut, Lebanon: Dār Maktabat al-Hayah, 1992), 33.

one without the other.<sup>20</sup> Books of wonders largely depended on books of travel and geography and some were even written having the traveler in mind.<sup>21</sup> In his preface to his fourteenth-century manuscript *Wonders of Creation*, al-Tusi states: “And we have put together this book, because not everyone can travel the horizons to see what he has not seen. We have told of the wonders of the world that we have seen and heard, and when possible, we have made pictures of them.”<sup>22</sup> Around the same time, books of wonders notably started framing wonders as “something that humans encounter by traveling whether geographically or cosmographically.”<sup>23</sup> This blurring of distinctions between manuscripts of wonders and travel books is also at work in the European context. Monstrous beings in Mandeville’s and in Marco Polo’s travels are derived from wonders depicted in manuscripts of wonders, such as Gervase of Tilbury’s thirteenth-century *Otia imperiali* and Gerald of Wales’s twelfth-century *Topographia Hibernica*, and before them in the ninth-century *Wonders of the East* and in Pliny the Elder’s *Historia Naturalis* (77 C.E. and completed posthumously by Pliny the Younger).<sup>24</sup> Perhaps the nexus between books of wonders and geography, however, is less apparent in European culture that distinguished between geography books and travel books since the latter did not include maps like their Arab counterpart did, and travelers were not necessarily cartographers.

Before pursuing these points further, it is helpful to examine briefly the legacy of marvels and monsters that each culture adopted, adapted, and later reproduced in travel writings and maps. In his writings, Gervase of Tilbury traces the medieval understanding of wonders/*mirabilia* to two roots: “experience of the novel or unexpected, and ignorance of cause.”<sup>25</sup> According to Jacques Le Goff in *The Medieval Imagination*, the root of *mirabilia* is “mir (as in mirror, mirart), which implies something visual and therefore, it is a question of looking.”<sup>26</sup> *Mirabilia* are also closely tied to monsters, as Umberto Eco clarifies in *Legendary Lands* that “Through the various tales about Alexander, there thus developed a subgenre of Oriental *mirabilia*, which was the list of

20 Berlekamp, *Wonder, Image, and Cosmos in Medieval Islam* (see note 6), 152.

21 Travel and geography were two overlapping fields in the Arab tradition. Travelers were both travelers and cartographers. Reports of wonders were sometimes included in both.

22 Berlekamp, *Wonder, Image, and Cosmos in Medieval Islam* (see note 6), 89.

23 Berlekamp, *Wonder, Image, and Cosmos in Medieval Islam* (see note 6), 4–5.

24 For a detailed history of marvels and monsters in Western thought, see Rudolf Wittkower, “Marvels of the East: A Study in the History of Monsters,” *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 5 (1942): 159–97.

25 Daston and Park, *Wonders and the Order of Nature* (see note 4), 23.

26 Jacques Le Goff, *The Medieval Imagination*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (1988; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 27–28.

the description of the monsters that could be encountered there, and we also find descriptions of this kind [of monsters] in Augustine, Isidore of Seville, and Mandeville.”<sup>27</sup>

The gamut of monstrous races was passed down to the medieval era through the writings of Solinus and Pliny the Elder and they became, as Mary Campbell suggests, “immutable,” and I would add, memorable.<sup>28</sup> These monsters include the dog-headed people (Cyncocephali), headless people (Blemyae), and the Amazons, among a host of other races.<sup>29</sup> While *mirabilia* sometimes extend to unnatural phenomena, I propose that the Plinian legacy of monstrous races oriented the western scope more toward non-human beings that the traveler expects to see in foreign lands, wild beings that gradually became a foil for medieval people. For many centuries, western travelers relied more on hearsay or audition in passing down the immutable races. The change from “audition” (hearsay) to “autopsia” (eyewitness) came about at a later stage (thirteenth century) in European culture when “travel narratives enhanced the possibility of the eye-witness account, something that constituted a new development ...”<sup>30</sup> The demarcating line between truth and fiction was not of significance in the pre-modern western world as the general acceptance of blending fact and fiction in travel writing proves.

The growing appetite for wonders emerged at a moment of significant cross-cultural contacts with non-European places and peoples. Specifically, it has been suggested that “the Crusades were a significant factor in the marked increase in the discourse on wonders in medieval Europe and that the encounter with the New World revitalized that interest in early modern Europe.”<sup>31</sup> Yet understandings of wonder and wonders have changed significantly over time depending on the different social groups who read the manuscripts and the cultural notions they maintained.<sup>32</sup>

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27 Umberto Eco, *The Book of Legendary Lands* (New York: Rizzoli Ex Libris, 2013), 99.

28 Mary B. Campbell, *The Witness and the Other World: Exotic European Travel Writing, 400–1600* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1988), 140.

29 See the contribution to this volume by Isidro Luis Jimenez, “The Myth of the Amazons in Medieval Spain.”

30 Alfred Hiatt, *Terra Incognita: Mapping the Antipodes before 1600* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), 102.

31 Berlekamp, *Wonder, Image, and Cosmos in Medieval Islam* (see note 6), 169. For more on the increased interest in wonders during specific cultural encounters, see Stephen Greenblatt, *Marvellous Possessions: The Wonder of the New World* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991); Daston and Park, *Wonders and the Order of Nature*; and Kenseth, *The Age of the Marvellous* (for both see note 4).

32 Daston and Park, *Wonders and the Order of Nature* (see note 4).

Turning to the Arab tradition, there are three common terms to describe the astonishing: *khurafa*, *'aga'ib*, and *ghara'ib*. The first term *khurafa* derives from the root kh, r, f, to corrupt the mind, which denotes stories considered by Ibn al-Nadim in his tenth-century work *Fihrist* to be pretty, fictitious, and most suitable to be told in the evenings after work – if they must be told at all. Al-Tawhidi, a late tenth-century author, suggested that *Khurafat* were most suited for women and children. The category included such fictions as the stories of the *One Thousand and One Nights*, the love story of *Layla and Majnun*, *Kalila wa-Dimna*, and certainly monsters and mythical creatures were part of the *Khurafat*.<sup>33</sup> According to Maria Kowalska, “these fantastic or semi-fantastic adventure stories dealing with exotic countries were not so much the work of travellers, such as sailors and merchants, as of people who did not travel themselves, but who passed on tales told by travellers and transformed them, sometimes in a fantastic manner, in the process.”<sup>34</sup> In this case, audition or hearsay was central to *khurafa*-making. The anecdote about the grandmother of the would-be Caliph al-Radi reveals the extent to which Arab culture dissociated *khurafas* from serious literature rather than incorporate it. The grandmother sent eunuchs to requisition the prince’s books so that she might censor his reading. When the eunuchs returned the collection of books to the prince, the latter berated them, saying, “these are purely learned and useful books on theology, jurisprudence, poetry, philology, history, and are not what you read – stories of the sea, the history of Sindbad and the ‘Fable of the Cat and the Mouse.’”<sup>35</sup>

In pre-Islamic literature, there was already a body of fables and *khurafat* though small. This corpus expanded with the translation of Aesop’s tales in the seventh century and their subsequent attribution to Luqman, a pre-Islamic sage who figures in the Qur’an, along with the translation of *Kalila wa Dimna* by the mid-eighth century. The Plinian legacy, on the other hand, was not passed down to the Arab culture who knew about Pliny’s work centuries after Europe.<sup>36</sup> Berlekamp notes that both the European and Islamic traditions concerning wonders “flourished at approximately the same time, that is, from the twelfth or thirteenth century through the eighteenth century [and] ... both drew

33 Robert Irwin, “The Arabic Beast Fable,” *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 55 (1992): 36–50; here 37.

34 Maria Kowalska, “From Facts to Literary Fiction: Medieval Arabic Travel Literature,” *Quaderni di Studi Arabi* 5/6 (1987–1988): 397–403; here 400.

35 Irwin, “The Arabic Beast Fable” (see note 33), 37.

36 Evelyn Edson and Emilie Savage-Smith, *Medieval Views of the Cosmos* (Oxford: Bodleian Library, 2004).

on some of the same sources from their shared classical heritage, such as Aristotle and Pliny ... [which] led to similar definitions of wonder, as a human response to that which is not immediately understood ...”<sup>37</sup> Yet she does not seem to take into consideration the significance of the delayed transmission of Pliny’s works to Arab culture in which case I would maintain that the translation of Aesop rather than Pliny oriented the Arab’s interest toward wondrous animals, plants, and natural phenomena rather than the Plinian monsters known to the west.

We see this disregard for Pliny’s work in Leo Africanus’s sixteenth-century travel account *Description of Africa*, a work that targets a Latin audience. The author here omits many things reported by Pliny on Africa, who “doubtless a man of rare and singular learning, notwithstanding by the default and negligence of certain authors which wrote before him, he erred a little in some small matters concerning Africa.”<sup>38</sup> Qazwini’s thirteenth-century *‘Aja’ib al-Makhlukat* (Wonders of Creation), the most prominent manuscript on wonders in Arab culture then, features some of the Plinian races, such as the dog-headed men. Yet there are remarkably few depictions of monsters in this manuscript. Out of 468 images in the manuscript, only 21 appear in the last chapter on animals that are exotic in form and shape.<sup>39</sup> The comparative dearth of monsters in the manuscript along with other later manuscripts of the same sort could be explained away by the delayed transmission of Pliny’s monsters. Yet just like the European tradition, the later growing appetite for wonders in Arab culture is remarkable after “the century and a half following the brutal Mongol Conquest of the Islamic east, in Iraq, Iran, and Central Asia during the mid-thirteenth century.”<sup>40</sup> The encounter with the other here fostered cross-cultural borrowing and fed people’s imagination.

For the second and more important term *‘aja’ib*, we need to turn to Qazwini who defines *‘ajab* as “the sense of bewilderment a person feels because of his inability to understand the cause of a thing.”<sup>41</sup> The definition resonates with a longing to understand the inexplicable and echoes Gervase of Tilbury’s definition mentioned earlier. As such, wonder here is a matter of the intellect rather than “a visual bedazzlement,” pretty much akin to “contemplative awe.”<sup>42</sup> In this, it is different from the term *mirabilia* that emphasizes the visual aspect. As

37 Berlekamp, *Wonder, Image, and Cosmos in Medieval Islam* (see note 6), 10.

38 Leo Africanus, *Jean-Lion l’Africain: Description de l’Afrique*, ed. Alexis Épaulard. Publication de l’Institut des Hautes Études Marocaines, 61 (Paris: Maisonneuve, 1956), 554.

39 Berlekamp, *Wonder, Image, and Cosmos in Medieval Islam* (see note 6), 39.

40 Berlekamp, *Wonder, Image, and Cosmos in Medieval Islam* (see note 6), ix.

41 Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, MSS cod. arab. 464, fol. 2a.

42 Berlekamp, *Wonder, Image, and Cosmos in Medieval Islam* (see note 6), 23.

Syrinx von Hees suggests, first, the term appears in the context of geographical literature, for example about *'aja'ib ad-dunya*, the wonders of the world.<sup>43</sup> These reports on geographic wonders included exotic news from distant countries and outstanding information on famous cities and architectural monuments there. Hence, again the overlap between wonders, geography, and travel.

The other term Qazwini employs is *ghara'ib* (oddities that are strange and rare). He defines the *gharib* as “a wonderous matter which occurs rarely, and is contrary to what is commonly known witnessed, and written about.”<sup>44</sup> For him, *Ghara'ib* are an offshoot of *'ajai'b*. Examples of oddities are miracles of the prophets, eclipses, earthquakes, the evil eye, the unique characteristics of unusual souls, asteroids, snowfall out of season, smoke that rises from the earth, and the births of animals with strange forms, such as conjoined twins. These are beyond the familiar and include things whose credibility the reader might doubt.<sup>45</sup> Between Qazwini's definition of *'aj'aib* and *ghara'ib*, the intellectual frame within which these concepts should be understood in subsequent works becomes largely established. Along with this, the Arab tradition hailed the authority of *'iyan* (autopsia) over hearsay as early as the tenth century as apparent in the writings of al-Mas'udi and Averroes.<sup>46</sup>

Qazwini's definitions and discussion of the concepts make his work indispensable in theorizing the genre of wonder narratives. For him the categories of wonders and oddities overlap, but are not synonymous. Oddities are a strange and rare subset of wonders, but both wonders and oddities do not have to be rare. This distinction between those two categories is not as clear in the European context where wonders had to be “rare, mysterious, and real.”<sup>47</sup> *Mirabilia* here cannot be synonymous with the Arabic terms, since *'aja'ib* is more comprehensive and encompassing. Put differently, it would be quite misleading to take the European term and perspective and foist it on the Arab tradition the way Berlekamp proposes: “One approach [of comparing wonders] is

43 Syrinx von Hees, “The Astonishing: A Critique of ‘Aja’ib Literature” (see note 5); here 104.

44 Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, MSS cod. arab. 464, fol. 2a (see note 41).

45 Berlekamp, *Wonder, Image, and Cosmos in Medieval Islam* (see note 6), 23. Also see Travis Zadeh, “The Wiles of Creation” (see note 5), for the question of credibility and truth in Qazwini's manuscript.

46 For more on the autoptic principle in medieval Arab writing, see Houari Touati, *Islam and Travel in the Middle Ages*, trans. Lydia G. Cochrane (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010); and James E. Montgomery, “Travelling Autopsies: Ibn Faḍlān and the Bulghār,” *Middle Eastern Literatures* 7 (2004): 3–32.

47 Daston and Park, *Wonders and the Order of Nature* (see note 4), 17.

suggested by affinities between the illustrated Islamic wonders-of-creation manuscripts and books of wonders made in Christian Europe.<sup>48</sup>

The affinities between wonders east and west in the way they manifest God's power and reveal His diverse creation should not overshadow the differences mentioned. One difference concerns human agency where the individual is more present and intertwined with wonders in the Arab tradition while less present and more distant from wonders in the Western tradition. On this point, there are two contrasting opinions. The first is proposed by Berlekamp who attributes the rise of human agency in Islamic wonders-of-creation manuscripts to the political turmoil ensuing the fourteenth-century Mongol conquest where the need emerged to "emphasize the possibilities for human agency within that order."<sup>49</sup> Conversely, much earlier Jacques Le Goff had already observed that marvels are inextricable from people since

In Muslim tales involving marvelous animals, plants, and objects, there is nearly always some reference to man. In the medieval West the opposite is true. The world is largely dehumanized. Marvels feature a world of monsters, animals, minerals, and plants. There is a rejection of humanism ...<sup>50</sup>

The distinction Le Goff draws between both traditions regarding human agency is convincing judging by travel accounts. What seems to escape Berlekamp's attention is the fact that the human agency she rightly notes in wonders-of-creation manuscripts finds precedence in Arab travel writing as early as in the tenth century.<sup>51</sup>

This brings us to yet another crucial difference in the case of the Western tradition where wonders preceded travel literature and informed the various travel accounts that borrowed the *mirabilia* and monsters available in wonders-of-creation manuscripts as mentioned before. The Arab tradition of wonders, in contrast, followed in the footsteps of travel literature – a self-conscious genre

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<sup>48</sup> Berlekamp, *Wonder, Image, and Cosmos in Medieval Islam* (see note 6), 10.

<sup>49</sup> Berlekamp, *Wonder, Image, and Cosmos in Medieval Islam* (see note 6), 1.

<sup>50</sup> Le Goff, *The Medieval Imagination* (see note 26), 32.

<sup>51</sup> Human agency is clear, for instance, in Ibn Fadlān's tenth-century account of the marvels he sees on his journey to Bulgaria and Russia where man is always part of the wonders seen. For more on Ibn Fadlān's account, see my article: Sally Abed, "Water Rituals and the Preservation of Identity in Ibn Fadlān's *Risala*," *Travel, Time, and Space in the Middle Ages and the Early Modern Time: Explorations of World Perceptions and Processes of Identity Formation*, ed. Albrecht Classen. *Fundamentals of Medieval and Early Modern Culture*, 22 (Berlin and Boston: Walter de Gruyter, 2018), 165–87.

that started as early as in the ninth century and had its roots in Arabic poetry.<sup>52</sup> We see this clearly in al-Gharnāti's travel book that informed the subsequent genre of wonders and the marvelous tales of the *One Thousand and One Nights*.<sup>53</sup>

Despite the differences in the depiction of the fantastical and the monstrous in both Arab and Western cultures, there are similarities in paying heed to strange customs, traditions and races. Also, both cultures share the theological-based fear of Gog and Magog, the monstrous race that will wreak havoc at the end of time as we shall see in Mandeville's and al-Gharnāti's travel accounts.

## Wonders in Mandeville's and Al-Gharnāti's Travel Accounts

While Mandeville allegedly travels east from England on pilgrimage in the fourteenth century, Al-Gharnāti travels east from Al-Andalus in the twelfth century "fired by wanderlust."<sup>54</sup> Mandeville traverses Asia Minor and Cilicia, Tartary, Persia, Jerusalem, Egypt, and India before he goes back to England whereas Al-Gharnāti traverses Sardinia, Sicily, Egypt, Baghdad, Persia, present day Russia, Khwarazm (in the territories of present-day Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan), Bulgaria, Hungary then back to Baghdad, Khurasan (northeastern Iran, southern Turkmenistan, and northern Afghanistan) and Damascus where he dies. Both travelers penned their travels in what became *The Travels of John Mandeville* and *Tuhfat al-albāb wa nukhbat al-I'jab* (Gift of Secrets and Selection of Wonders). The shared fascination with wonders by the two authors opens up their work for comparison.

Around three hundred copies of Mandeville's travels have survived, in different translations, ranging from English, French, and German to Latin, Czech,

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52 In the ninth century a tradition of traveling through routes and realms with the aim of recording the different cultures was initiated by Ibn Khurdadibah's work *kitāb al masālik wal mamālik* (The Book of Routes and Realms). Subsequent geographers and travelers nuanced the tradition and gave it full shape. For the beginnings of travel literature and the influence of Arabic poetry, see Abdurrahmane Hmeida, *A'lam al-Jughrafiyyin al-'Arab* (Damascus: Dar al-Fikr, 1988).

53 Hussein Mu'nis, "Introduction" *Tarikh al-Jughrafiya wa-l-Jughrafiyyin fi Al-Andalus* (Madrid: Institute of Islamic Studies, 1968). In the same source, Mu'nis compares al-Gharnāti to Herodotus, 355–56; here 342.

54 F. El-Manssouri, "Abu-Hamid: The Twelfth-Century Granadan Traveler," *International Journal of Islamic and Arabic Studies* 5 (1988): 43–58; here 43.



and Spanish, among others.<sup>55</sup> Likewise, Al-Gharnāti's text enjoyed wide circulation and survived in about eleven extant manuscripts and was translated into French, German, and Spanish by modern scholars.<sup>56</sup> Both texts elicited a wide and controversial spectrum of responses that ranged from praise to denunciation. For some, Mandeville is "a literary hoax" and "an unredeemable fraud."<sup>57</sup> For others, he is a scholar and "the author of the romance of travel."<sup>58</sup> Likewise, Al-Gharnāti's text was dismissed by some of his contemporaries, like Ibn 'Asakir (d. 1175), as a work of fables and myths that does not merit serious study. In recent centuries, modern scholarship vindicated him noting that historical truths and accurate geographic facts could be gleaned from al-Gharnāti's fantastic account of wonders.<sup>59</sup>

When in Mosul in Iraq, Al-Gharnāti was urged by an Imam (a man of religion) called Abi Hafs Omar ibn Muhamad to put down the wonders he saw in a book.<sup>60</sup> Unlike Mandeville, he was clear about writing a book on wonders from the beginning. Conversely, Mandeville wrote his account initially to record his pilgrimage to Jerusalem as he claims, though in essence he records abundant marvels since "many people enjoy and take pleasure in hearing foreign things spoken about."<sup>61</sup> The inclusion of unbelievable marvels leads both to try to lend credibility to their accounts. Mandeville asserts he saw what he describes early on in his account and repeats his claim when speaking of the Khan in Cathay: "Those who want to may believe me if they please, and those who do not may ignore it ... I will not leave off describing something ... just because of those who know nothing and believe nothing unless they see it."<sup>62</sup> In a similar move, Al-Gharnāti confidently states: "if the wise [man] hears the wondrous, he

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55 Ian Higgins, "Introduction," (see note 1), xii–xiii.

56 Al-'Arabi, "Introduction," *Tufat al-Albāb* (see note 1), 23–27.

57 Mary Campbell, *The Witness and the Other* (see note 28), 126; and Stephen Greenblatt, *Marvellous Possessions* (see note 31), 31

58 Josephine Waters Bennett, *The Rediscovery of Sir John Mandeville* (New York: Modern Language Association, 1954), 73 and 53; and Donald Howard, "The World of Mandeville's Travels," *The Yearbook of English Studies* 1 (1971): 1–17; here 2.

59 Qasim Wahb, "Introduction," *Rihlat al-Gharnāti* (Abu Dhabi: Dar al-Suwaydi, 2003). For the Western scholars' translation and take on the book, see al-'Arabi, "Introduction" (see note 1), 12–15. See also, the English translation of al-Gharnāti's first book *al-Mu'rib 'an ba 'd 'ajā'ib al-Maghrib* (Exposition of Some of the Wonders of the East) in *Ibn Fadlān and the Land of Darkness: Arab Travellers in the Far North*, trans. with an intro. Paul Lunde and Caroline Stone. Edition, 1 (London: Penguin Books, 2012), 61–92.

60 Al-'Arabi, "Introduction" *Tufat al-Albāb* (see note 1), 31.

61 John Mandeville, *The Book of John Mandeville* (see note 1), 15.

62 John Mandeville, *The Book of John Mandeville* (see note 1), 133–34.

likes it and does not accuse the speaker of lying and does not criticize him, whereas if the ignorant hears what he did not see, he accuses the speaker of lying, [and] changing the truth for his lack of wisdom.”<sup>63</sup> Then he cites Qur’anic verses that speak against the ignorant to bolster his claims through invoking religious authority.

Fabricators of lies or not, Al-Gharnāti’s *Tuhfa* and Mandeville’s *The Travels* became influential texts. For successive authors, Al-Gharnāti was the founder of a literary school that cuts across *adab al rihla* (travel literature) and geography. Moreover, he was also considered the founder of the tradition of wonders.<sup>64</sup> A less known work with a complex composition history on wonders that preceded al-Gharnāti’s account is Buzurg b. Shahriyar’s tenth-century *The Wonders of India*. However, it was al-Gharnāti’s work that informed and shaped the rising genre of wonders-of-creation manuscripts, specifically Qazwini’s thirteenth-century *‘Aja’ib al-Makhlukāt* (Wonders of Creation) who borrows from him and illustrates the description of strange creatures.<sup>65</sup> For historians, al-Gharnāti’s text was crucial in providing detailed description of the volcano of Mount Etna, the storied lighthouse of Alexandria, and certain places where he sojourned for a long time, such as Hungary and Ukraine. He was also the first to write about the trade in bones in the Volga area and Khwarazm.<sup>66</sup>

Mandeville’s influence was equally important for he promoted the possibility of circumnavigating the earth long before European explorers actually did so. He promoted the idea partly by relating the story of the young man who circumnavigated the earth and partly through asserting his readiness to do the same provided he had men and shipping. His account of marvels inspired future explorers on their travels, such as Christopher Columbus and Sir Walter Raleigh who both obviously read him and cited him in their accounts. The headless race Mandeville describes features in Raleigh’s account of the New World, for instance.

Al-Gharnāti’s book is divided into four sections on: 1) people and jinnis, 2) countries and wondrous architecture, 3) seas, wondrous creatures and islands, 4) tombstones and graves. Throughout his travels, he focuses more on people’s strange customs and traditions, wondrous animals, plants, and wondrous architecture than on monstrous races. Al-Qazwini’s manuscript adopts the same mental framework in the way monsters receive less attention than the rest of

<sup>63</sup> Al-Gharnāti, *Tuhfat al-Albāb* (see note 1), 33

<sup>64</sup> Al-‘Arabi, “Introduction” (see note 1), 10 and 14.

<sup>65</sup> For his influence on other authors who borrow from him, see al-‘Arabi, “Introduction” (see note 1), 11.

<sup>66</sup> Al-‘Arabi, “Introduction” (see note 1), 18.

subjects as mentioned before. The first half of Mandeville's text recounts the pilgrimage to Jerusalem as Mandeville journeys through Constantinople, Egypt, Cyprus, Sicily, and the Sinai. Beginning with chapter 16, his itinerary shifts to a wide-ranging tour of the lands, Cathay and India, to the east of Jerusalem: "Now is time ... to speak to you about the neighboring lands, the islands, and the diverse animals and diverse peoples beyond these boundaries."<sup>67</sup>

Mandeville's justification for writing the book dictates a slightly different structure from that of Al-Gharnāti's. He describes places en route to and post going to Jerusalem for pilgrimage and intersperses his description with *mira-bilia* that demonstrate the regenerative multiplicity of the monstrous races. Conversely, al-Gharnāti clarifies that his book is mainly dedicated to wonders, and, thus, he structures it accordingly.

Having said this, let's turn now to some of the most prominent common wonders in both works, namely Gog and Magog, the Amazons, the headless races, giant birds and ants, and giant people.<sup>68</sup> Al-Gharnāti starts out by describing Gog and Magog in the first chapter. He says they are the descendants of Japheth and live in the extreme north of a land attached to the sea of darkness that spans eighty years journeying. A dam built by the Qur'anic military figure Dhu al-Qarnayn separates the race from us. He then adds that their number is as countless as cattle, they practice archery, possess the mightiness of ferocious lions, and have no religion.<sup>69</sup> The account of Gog and Magog represents "the sacred geography and the apocalyptic vision inherent in religious exegesis. It overlaps with medieval Arab maps that always depicted the barrier to the land of Gog and Magog in the extreme north, thus representing for medieval thought 'the frontiers of knowledge, a semiotic 'No more beyond' (*non plus ultra*), which ... demarcates the limitations of human capacity.'"<sup>70</sup> They are always placed in the extreme north – an area that held special fascination for Arabs since it was little known. Previous attempts to reach Gog and Magog were undertaken by Sallām al-Turjumān in the ninth century, and in the tenth century Ibn Fadlān claims to have seen one of their races in Bulgaria. They were always depicted on maps, such as Ibn Hawkal's in the tenth century, verbally rather than visually in an arctic circle inscribed by the phrase "the land of

<sup>67</sup> John Mandeville, *The Book of John Mandeville* (see note 1), 89.

<sup>68</sup> Since al-Gharnāti's text precedes Mandeville's in its date of composition, I will examine it first throughout this section on wonders.

<sup>69</sup> Al-Gharnāti, *Tuhfat al-Albāb* (see note 1), 37–38. See same source footnote 55 on the list of the other Arab geographers and travelers who mention Gog and Magog, 38.

<sup>70</sup> Sally Abed, "Water Rituals and the Preservation of Identity in Ibn Fadlān's *Risala*" (see note 51), 184.

Gog and Magog.” In Ibn Hawqal’s manuscript *Surat al-Ard* (Picture of the Earth) as well as other texts, the race is said to have traded with Arab merchants, an interaction we do not see here in al-Gharnāti’s text who likens them to cattle and lions, animals he is familiar with.<sup>71</sup>

In Mandeville’s *Travels*, he mentions the races who represent the Jews of the Ten Tribes. They reside in the East beyond the Caspian mountains where they were locked in by Alexander the Great. The association with the Jews is particular to Mandeville and speaks to the unfair process of othering Jews in medieval Europe. However, he neither encounters them nor describes them physically. They remain unseen and dissociated from people, but pay tribute to the Queen of Amazonia.<sup>72</sup> Throughout the entire chapter, Mandeville describes this ‘Jewish’ race and the manner in which they will escape captivity to wreak havoc at the end of time. On thirteenth-century medieval maps, such as the Hereford and Ebstorf *mappae mundi*, Gog and Magog are visually depicted. Just like in Islamic thought, they, too, represent the apocalyptic vision inherent in religious exegesis. Their place and depiction on medieval world maps vary though in each culture. Together with this, in Arab travel texts there is possible human interaction and trade with them even if this is not apparent in al-Gharnāti’s text. In Mandeville’s they are associated with another monstrous race, the Amazons – a race also present in al-Gharnāti’s text.

Al-Gharnāti places the Amazons in the Moroccan deserts where, he says, there is “a nation/people (*umma*) of women born of Adam and no men live among them. These women enter into a water space in their realm by which they get pregnant. They give birth to girls only and never to boys.” He further asserts that someone called “Tab’ Dhi al-Manar reached them when he wanted to reach the darkness that Dhu al-Qarnayn entered.”<sup>73</sup> In other Arab travel accounts, there are variations on the legend. Ibn Sa’id talks about an island for women and another for men, while Qazwini takes al-Gharnāti’s account and places the Amazons on an island close to Morocco where each woman owns a male slave who visits her at night. When a boy is born out of the union, he is immediately killed.<sup>74</sup> Mandeville, however, places the Amazons in Asia in

71 Sally Abed, “Water Rituals and the Preservation of Identity in Ibn Fadlān’s *Risala*” (see note 51), 184–85.

72 John Mandeville, *The Book of John Mandeville* (see note 1), 157–59.

73 Al-Gharnāti, *Tuhfat al-Albāb* (see note 1), 43–44. See in same source footnote 61 for the Amazons mentioned in other travel accounts.

74 Al-Gharnāti, *Tuhfat al-Albāb* (see note 1), 44. See note 61 for the Amazons mentioned in other travel accounts. Also, see Nizar Hermes, *The [European] Other in Medieval Arabic Literature and Culture: Ninth – Twelfth Century AD* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 119–21.

keeping with the Greek legacy and the cartographic tradition of medieval maps. His Amazons got rid of the remaining men on their island after the war with Scythians that killed many of their men. They seek men's company in neighboring lands and if a boy is born, he is either returned to the father or killed. Their military prowess is such that they guard the wall that encloses Gog and Magog.<sup>75</sup>

Yet they descend from Noah's son Cham after the devils had copulated with his female line, thus producing many of the monstrous races.<sup>76</sup> Arab and Western accounts of the Amazons are structurally similar. Their geographic location, however, shifts from east to Africa in the Arab accounts in a gesture that signals their geographic proximity in the Arab tradition – a proximity that makes them reachable by other male travelers. They are not relegated to the margins or the antipodal zone of Western geography. Moreover, their lineage is attributed to Adam rather than to a monstrous union with the devils. Two points are worth making here: in the Western tradition, the descent of the monstrous races from Adam was controversial and posed a theological problem that Saint Augustine attempted to resolve in his writings, whereas in the Arab tradition there was no problem associating the race with Adam. Interestingly, the Arabs also used the term 'ummah' to describe some of those races – a term that means nation or people and is always used by Arabs to designate the Ummah-t al-Islam (the Muslim people or nation) during the Middle Ages. Becoming pregnant by water without any clear male intervention is surprising here and does not seem to be part of the Western legacy.

The third figure Greek legacy bequeathed to both cultures are the headless race mentioned in passing by al-Gharnāti: "In Sudan there lives a headless people (ummah) mentioned by Sha'bi in his *Sair al-Muluk*."<sup>77</sup> The narrative suddenly digresses here and turns to the aforementioned Amazons and the torrent-like sandy Valley of Saturday where all those who enter perish, except Dhu al-Qarnayn who manages to calm the sand and cross it, before al-Gharnāti continues saying: the headless people "have eyes in their shoulders and mouths in their chests, they are countless and multiply like cattle, but they pose no harm

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<sup>75</sup> John Mandeville, *The Book of John Mandeville* (see note 1), 96–97 and 159.

<sup>76</sup> John Mandeville, *The Book of John Mandeville* (see note 1), 134. On the Amazons in Western thought, see Wittkower, "Marvels of the East" (see note 24); John Block Friedman, *The Monstrous Races in Medieval Art and Thought* (see note 4); and the contribution to this volume by Isidro Luis Jimenez, "The Myth of the Amazons in Medieval Spain."

<sup>77</sup> Al-Gharnāti, *Tuhfat al-Albāb* (see note 1), 43.

for anyone and have no brains.”<sup>78</sup> The sandy valley here recalls the Sandy Sea in the land of Prester John that Mandeville mentions, but in his account no one has ever crossed it and it is rife with fish even though there is no water.<sup>79</sup>

Also in the East, Mandeville mentions the headless people who like the Amazons are of monstrous birth, but are “ugly,” “evil” with “ears in their shoulders, and their mouth twisted like a horseshoe in the middle of their chest” and on another island, the race also exists but they have “their eyes and their mouth behind their shoulders.”<sup>80</sup> Once more, in al-Gharnāti’s account the *ummah* shifts place from the east to Africa, a close realm, and again human interaction is implied here for the race is harmless for anyone who encounters it. Just like the Amazons, he refers to them as ‘ummah.’ What seems disturbing for him is their countless numbers and multiplication like cattle, and more important, like Gog and Magog, while in Mandeville’s account the threat comes from their cruel and evil nature and unmistakable ugliness, which makes them harmful. There is no human contact with the race in Mandeville’s text unlike their counterpart in the Arab text.

Nearly similar wonders in both texts are legendary birds and huge ants. Notably, al-Gharnāti was the first to describe the legendary bird known as *Rukh* (in English Rok) before other Arab travelers and even before Marco Polo did.<sup>81</sup> Of the bird that he locates in China he says, it has huge wings and was mentioned by al-Jahiz in his book *al-Hayawan* (The Book of Animals). Here al-Gharnāti relates the first-hand account of a man who came back from China with the bird feather. The man tells al-Gharnāti that he and his companions were thrown by the wind on an island where they saw a huge *Rukh* egg that they broke open with axes, stones, and wood. When the youngster was out, they killed it and took its meat aboard the sailing ship only to be almost overtaken by the mother bird that hovered above them as a large cloud, and threw a huge house-size stone at them.<sup>82</sup> The *Rukh* features prominently in Arabic literature and is possibly of Persian origin. It is famous for carrying travelers from place to place as it does in the story of Sindbad the Sailor in the *1001 Nights*.

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<sup>78</sup> Al-Gharnāti, *Tuhfat al-Albāb* (see note 1), 45.

<sup>79</sup> John Mandeville, *The Book of John Mandeville* (see note 1), 162.

<sup>80</sup> John Mandeville, *The Book of John Mandeville* (see note 1), 124.

<sup>81</sup> Al-‘Arabi, “Introduction” (see note 1), 23. In Polo’s account, he speaks of griffins and contradicts Mandeville’s account by asserting that they are more like eagles. He also says that the inhabitants of Madagascar call them *rukḥ*, but they are certainly griffins and not *rukḥ*. For Polo’s description, see Marco Polo, *The Travels*, trans. Ronald Latham (London: Penguin Classics, 1958), 300–01.

<sup>82</sup> Al-Gharnāti, *Tuhfat al-Albāb* (see note 1), 131–32.

Notably, both the *Nights* and Qazwini's *Wonders of Creation* borrow the legendary bird from al-Gharnāti.<sup>83</sup> By the same token, legendary birds, this time griffins, feature in Mandeville's account: "From the land of Gog and Magog beyond Caspian mountains and Cathay, there is ... [Bactria] inhabited by wicked and cruel people half-man half-horse who eat people. In this country there are more griffins than elsewhere."<sup>84</sup> Their bodies are half-eagle and half-lion. Mandeville describes them as bigger than lions and stronger than eagles. In al-Gharnāti's account, and in medieval Arab writings in general, there is always human interaction between the *Rukh* and travelers. The *Rukh* is a means of adventure and transportation for travelers as it carries them to different places and it is not always harmful. Conversely, in Mandeville's account the legendary griffin does not interact with people, but lives in close proximity to half-man, half-horse beings that devour people.

The other near parallel wonder is the giant ants in both accounts. Al-Gharnāti relates that upon trying to find Solomon's City of Copper, Musa bin Nusir and his men were attacked by giant ants the size of lions that cut up some of the former's men and horses, and eventually drove the survivors away.<sup>85</sup> Turning to Mandeville, on the island of Taprobane, there are ants the size of dogs that guard large mountains of gold and attack whoever attempts to steal it.<sup>86</sup> In both cases, ants are huge in size and guard something precious, be it a legendary city or a wealth of gold, but we see a direct confrontation between the ants and man in the Arab account.

Giant people feature in both Arab and Western texts. Al-Gharnāti encounters a kind and humble giant man in Bulgaria and befriends him. He was so huge that he could only frequent one public bath with wide doors and he was "one of the most wondrous human beings/sons of Adam" (*min a'jab bani adam*) whose like al-Gharnāti had never seen before. He continues that the giant had one sister who killed her husband, not surprisingly called Adam, when she hugged him strongly.<sup>87</sup> The giants in Mandeville are mentioned in Dondia in the east as "hideous to see" with "one eye in middle of the forehead" and they eat raw fish and meat.<sup>88</sup> On another unnamed island to the east, there is a giant almost naked people who have no houses and prefer to eat human flesh. Travelers stay away from their island and Mandeville expresses no wish

<sup>83</sup> Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, MSS cod. arab. 464, fol. 65a-65b (see note 41)

<sup>84</sup> John Mandeville, *The Book of John Mandeville* (see note 1), 159–60.

<sup>85</sup> Al-Gharnāti, *Tuhfat al-Albāb* (see note 1), 63.

<sup>86</sup> John Mandeville, *The Book of John Mandeville* (see note 1), 178–79.

<sup>87</sup> Al-Gharnāti, *Tuhfat al-Albāb* (see note 1), 153.

<sup>88</sup> John Mandeville, *The Book of John Mandeville* (see note 1), 124.

to see them because they were known for catching people and eating them raw.<sup>89</sup> Giants are radically different in the two accounts. They are humanized, approachable, and could be befriended in al-Gharnāti's work, whereas they are utterly monstrous and cannibalistic in Mandeville's account.

Just as the accounts of wonders in the two works converge sometimes, they also diverge at other times. Among the most striking wonders in al-Gharnāti's text that have no counterpart in Mandeville's are the jinn, the Nasnas, the woman inside the fish, and wondrous architecture and graves. Of the Nasnas, al-Gharnāti says in Yemen there is an Arab race that were transformed into half human beings with each having half a head, half a body, one hand and one leg. They are descendants of Sam and they are brainless. Arabs call this people the Nasnas and hunt them down. Though brainless, the Nasnas speak in Arabic, multiply, have Arabic names, and recite poetry. One merchant went to Yemen and saw them hopping on one foot and climbing up trees for fear of dogs. The merchant also heard one of them recite lines of poetry that al-Gharnāti includes in his account.<sup>90</sup> Endowing monsters with speech and reason in the Arab tradition contradicts Aristotle's and Aquinas's attribution of speech and reason to humans only and their claim that these two traits distinguish people from animal.

Usually attributed to full humans, it is striking here that Arabic poetry, a high form of literature that the Arabs excelled in and prided themselves on, is attributed to a semi-human race.<sup>91</sup> Perhaps this is a reminder that they were once fully human and that they occupy a threshold between the familiar and the unfamiliar. They are endowed with humanity and they interact with people. Similar to the Nasnas, though not identical, in Western thought are the Sciapodes of India, the one-footed race that shields itself from the sun with its umbrella-like foot.<sup>92</sup> Mandeville places them in Ethiopia and says they jump fast on their single foot that shades them from the sun, but they do not enjoy the same depth in character as the Nasnas.<sup>93</sup> They, too, are distant from people and do not interact with them.

Particular to the Arab tradition are creatures of fire called jinn. They figure in the Qur'an as Solomon's subjects who perform wonders for him, in the *1001*

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<sup>89</sup> John Mandeville, *The Book of John Mandeville* (see note 1), 169.

<sup>90</sup> Al-Gharnāti, *Tuhfat al-Albāb* (see note 1), 42–43.

<sup>91</sup> Though not on the speech of monsters, see *Animal Languages in the Middle Ages: Representations of Interspecies Communication*. ed. Alison Langdon. The New Middle Ages. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018).

<sup>92</sup> Samarrai, "Beyond Belief and Reverence" (see note 7), 40.

<sup>93</sup> John Mandeville, *The Book of John Mandeville* (see note 1), 98.



*Nights* as part of the mythical creatures who also perform wonders and transport the characters to different places, in manuscripts of wonders, and in al-Gharnāti's *Tuhfa*. In the latter, jinn are mentioned on many occasions. First, there is the female jinn who laid thirty-one eggs, and out of one came a monstrous creature called *katraba*. Endless kinds of jinn issue from the other eggs and they inhabit all spaces and places.<sup>94</sup> Fantastic architecture is also thought to have been built by jinn. Some examples are the Copper City, Rome, and a building in Alexandria the marbled pillars of which were so pure that one could see the person behind it, all built by the jinn for Solomon.<sup>95</sup> The inclusion of the jinn in religious exegesis and the association with Solomon associated them to wondrous architecture. It was more exciting to attribute these buildings to a superhuman power.

If Mandeville's account is replete with countless races, al-Gharnāti's is replete with countless marvelous buildings like his extended description of the famous Alexandria lighthouse and the Pyramids that Mandeville describes hastily and calls Joseph's Granaries.<sup>96</sup> Some of al-Gharnāti's buildings and lighthouses and stories of graves of sinners and believers find their way to the *1001 Nights*. It is almost dizzying to keep track of all the wonders in his account, yet one last wondrous creature that merits attention is the mermaid inside the fish. In Bulgaria, the merchants recount catching a huge fish that opens up and reveals a wailing mermaid-like woman inside that dies shortly after.<sup>97</sup>

Mandeville's account likewise distinguishes itself with respect to certain wonders, such as the Cynocephali and the legend of Prester John. The former are the dog-headed races. They possess "reason and good understanding" and are devout despite being un-Christian. But they devour anyone caught in battle.<sup>98</sup> The Cynocephali recall the Nasnas in that they, too, are endowed with speech and some culture for they recite prayers here. Mandeville's attitude, Bennett remarks, reveals, "The sympathetic imagination to credit the remote people dwelling on the other side of the earth with the feelings, desires, and human failings which he had observed at home."<sup>99</sup> He attempts to humanize

<sup>94</sup> Al-Gharnāti, *Tuhfat al-Albāb* (see note 1), 47–49 and 134.

<sup>95</sup> Al-Gharnāti, *Tuhfat al-Albāb* (see note 1), 60, 68, and 100. 'Rumiya' is thought by scholars to be either Rome or Constantinople.

<sup>96</sup> Al-Gharnāti, *Tuhfat al-Albāb* (see note 1), 94–102. On Joseph's Granaries, see John Mandeville, *The Book of John Mandeville* (see note 1), 32.

<sup>97</sup> Al-Gharnāti, *Tuhfat al-Albāb* (see note 1), 139. See also the contribution to this volume by Martha Moffitt Peacock, "The Mermaid of Edam and the Rise of Dutch National Identity."

<sup>98</sup> John Mandeville, *The Book of John Mandeville* (see note 1), 121.

<sup>99</sup> Bennett, *The Rediscovery of Sir John Mandeville* (see note 58), 5.

some of the races even though human interaction is still minimal. Though the Cynocephali are not mentioned in the *Tuhfa*, Qazwini includes them in his *'Aja'ib*.

The legend of Prester John, the mythical Christian king who lives in the East, occupies a substantial part of Mandeville's account. He employs the legend to accommodate the numerous monstrous races he encounters on the islands of Prester John. Part of the wondrous nature of the king's realm are the creatures who live there and the accumulated wealth and power he wields. Strange phenomena are equally fascinating in his realm, such as the Sandy Sea that has waterless waves, pebbles, and fish. Close to it, there are mountains out of which flows one of the rivers of Paradise. This river flows with precious stones. Beyond the river, there is a plain where bewitched shrubs grow until noon and after midday they shrink back to the ground.<sup>100</sup> The description of the Enchanted Valley there recalls the island of Jinn in the *Tuhfa*. Like the island, great noises are heard and most who dare to venture there never return. Mandeville nuances the account by adding the wealth present there along with the head and face of a terrible devil. Unlike al-Gharnāti, Mandeville enters the valley with some companions and records its wonders.<sup>101</sup>

Concerning the aesthetics of wonder and monstrosity, it would require looking beyond the two works in question to examine the issue. But so far, cannibalism and ugliness seem to define monstrosity in Mandeville's account of the giants, the Blemyae, and the Cynocephali. By contrast, concerns with ugliness and cannibalism do not seem to be part of al-Gharnāti's account of monsters, such as Nasnas and Blemyae. Here, what joins these races is their brainlessness. The focus on the immensity of size and the exercise of imagination, however, seem to be shared by both writers, be it in their description of monumental architecture, wealthy kingdoms, or huge ants.

## Conclusion

On the whole, there is more room in medieval Arab works for human involvement with marvels and monsters which are not necessarily banished to geographic extremes. The individual does not set himself apart from the wondrous and describe it from a distance, but rather steps into the picture and becomes part of it through dynamic interaction. Also, the possible direct descendance of

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<sup>100</sup> John Mandeville, *The Book of John Mandeville* (see note 1), 160–62.

<sup>101</sup> John Mandeville, *The Book of John Mandeville* (see note 1), 166–67.

monsters from Adam does not seem to occupy the minds of Arab thinkers. The delayed transmission of Pliny might have contributed to this different treatment of monsters that does not distance people from them. The geographic proximity makes the monsters relatable to people on both the psychological, and even linguistic level, as in the case of the Nasnas. Perhaps this proximity between people and the world of monsters, except Gog and Magog, also comes from the fact that by the time Greek monsters found their way into Arab culture, Arabs had long been on the road, and for them the unknown was already becoming known. And therefore, monsters were banished from the strain of travel accounts that privileged the real over the fantastic and also from Arab maps.

The rise of the genre of wonders of creation manuscripts logically then is a direct outcome of travel literature as seen in al-Ghanati's work becoming a cornerstone of the literature of wonders. By contrast, the individual is not much involved with wonders in parallel Western accounts. He sets himself apart from the wondrous and describes it from afar as if it were a static painting. Interaction is largely minimal between the human and the nonhuman. Instead, there is a remarkable overflow of monsters who seem to be on the loose and stand apart from humanity. This distance extends to the geographic sphere where monsters inhabit the margins, and also theologically where monsters are not often direct descendants of Adam.

Travel literature is largely influenced by wonders of creation manuscripts and the Plinian legacy at a time when large areas were still unknown. Even when travelers ventured more into uncharted territories the authority of traditions colored their expectations of meeting monsters and wonders on the road and determined their reaction to them. They were, nevertheless, more incorporated in travel texts, especially with the lack of distinction between real and fictional travel accounts, and were certainly present in the fascinating medieval maps.

The comparison between travel texts on wonders and monsters certainly deserves a more lengthy and comprehensive study that would incorporate other travel works and other genres, such as encyclopedias, maps, and wonders of creation manuscripts. I am hoping that this study will be the beginning of a more fruitful comparative work in this direction of medieval global studies. So, let there be monsters and wonders!



Christa Agnes Tuczay

# Are Dreams Gender-Related? The Function of Dreams in Middle High German Narrative Literature

## Introduction

The acceptance of dreams and dream images or skepticism about their prophetic power characterizes the “oneiric beliefs of almost every social group. Only the specific form of faith or skepticism has varied from culture to culture and from age to age.”<sup>1</sup> Although the modern study of dreams is generally associated with Sigmund Freud and C. G. Jung, it is not well-known how much Freud<sup>2</sup> was in many respects inspired by his readings of the *Onerokritika* of Artemidor (second century C.E.).<sup>3</sup> People in antiquity and in the Middle Ages were also intensely interested in dreams and their meanings, as David Bennett and Filip Radovic examine in greater detail in their contribution to this volume. The focus of this paper, by contrast, rests on dreams and dreambooks as discussed in medieval German literature, and this on the basis of new comprehensive data collections.

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1 R. Howard Bloch, “A Study of the Dream Motif in the Old French Narrative,” Ph.D. diss. Stanford University, 1970, 2–3.

2 Sigmund Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, trans. Joyce Crick (1899; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

3 Artemidorus, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, trans. Martin Hammond, with an introduction and notes by Peter Thonemann. Oxford’s World Classics (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020); Beat Näf, “Freuds ‘Traumdeutung’ – Vorläufer in der Antike,” *Der Traum – hundert Jahre nach Freuds Traumdeutung*, ed. Brigitte Boothe (Zürich: vdf Hochschulverlag an der ETH Zürich, 2000), 59–80. See also Beat Näf, “Antike Formen der Traumdeutung und ihre Rezeption – Josef Ennemoser (1844) und Sigmund Freud (2000),” *Artemidor von Daldis und die antike Traumdeutung: Texte – Kontexte – Lektüren*, ed. Gregor Weber (Berlin and Boston: Walter de Gruyter, 2015), 327–48; see also Beat Näf, *Traum und Traumdeutung im Altertum* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2004), 124–28; Lucio Russo, *Die vergessene Revolution oder die Wiedergeburt des antiken Wissens* (Berlin and Heidelberg: Springer Verlag, 2005), 245–49.

Medieval dreambooks, in particular the *Somniale Danielis* (fifth century; Dreams of Daniel),<sup>4</sup> are an indispensable tool for the interpretation of medieval literary dreams. As with other medieval literary forms, the dream vision, a genre unique to the period, was securely founded upon the medieval reverence of classical and ancient authorities. Although secular narrative literature adopted the dream vision and dream prophecy ‘merely’ as a motif, it is characterized by the intertextuality and interdependence of dream and superstition discourses while also displaying the debate about the truth of dreams and visions.<sup>5</sup>

In the Charlemagne Cycle, the originally French national epic (matter of France), Charlemagne has wild dreams of thunder, lightning, and fire, and, in another dream, of a battle with bears, leopards, snakes, dragon, and griffons (see below).<sup>6</sup> In the *Nibelungenlied* (ca. 1200), in her famous falcon dream, Kriemhilt foresees great suffering when she would fall in love, and here she perceives already Siegfried’s future death in her dream of the two wild boars, a death which she cannot prevent.<sup>7</sup> In Lambrecht’s *Alexander* romance, on the eve before the battle with the Persians Alexander the Great dreams that his father advises him to go behind the enemy lines, which he does and where he is

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4 Steven R. Fischer, *The Complete Medieval Dreambook: A Multilingual, Alphabetical Somnia Danielis Collation* (Bern and Frankfurt a. M.: Peter Lang, 1982). Steven R. Fischer, “Dreambooks and the Interpretation of Medieval Literary Dreams,” *Archiv für Kulturgeschichte* 65 (1983): 1–20; Steven F. Kruger, *Dreaming in the Middle Ages*. Cambridge Studies in Medieval Literature, 14 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992); *Somniale Danielis: An Edition of a Medieval Latin Dream Interpretation Handbook*, ed. Lawrence T. Martin. Lateinische Sprache und Literatur des Mittelalters, 10, and European University Studies, Series 1, German Language and Literature, 375 (Frankfurt a. M., Bern, and Cirencester, UK: Peter Lang, 1981); Hans-Jürgen Bachorski, “Träume, die überhaupt niemals geträumt: Zur Deutung von Träumen in der mittelalterlichen Literatur,” *Weltbilder des mittelalterlichen Menschen*, ed. Heinz-Dieter Heimann et al. (Berlin: Weidler Buchverlag, 2007), 15–52; Albrecht Classen, “Die narrative Funktion des Traumes in mittelhochdeutscher Literatur,” *Mediaevistik* 5 (1992): 11–37; id., “Transpositions of Dreams to Reality in Middle High German Narratives,” *Shifts and Transpositions in Medieval Narratives. A Festschrift for Dr. Elspeth Kennedy*, ed. Karen Pratt (Woodbridge, Suffolk: D. S. Brewer, 1994), 109–20.

5 The most recent approach focusing on narrative structures of dreams in Middle High German epics was undertaken by Benjamin van Well, *Mir troumt hinaht ein troum. Untersuchung zur Erzählweise von träumen in mittelhochdeutscher Epik*. Schriften der Wiener Germanistik, 4 (Göttingen: V&R unipress, 2016).

6 *Karl der Große von dem Stricker*, ed. Karl Bartsch. Neudrucke (1857; rpt. Berlin and Boston: Walter de Gruyter, 2019).

7 *Das Nibelungenlied*. Parallelruck der Handschriften A, B und C nebst Lesarten der übrigen Handschriften, ed. Michael S. Batts (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer 1971), 13–18, 921–24.

caught.<sup>8</sup> Apparently, all these dreams had a great significance for their medieval audiences, as is evident from various scenes similar to these few examples in medieval literature at large.<sup>9</sup>

If the audience was able to understand the meaning, we can conclude that there must have been commonly known symbols which the medieval poets consciously exploited in their texts. However, for the modern recipient, even medievalists, the immediate meaning of these symbols is often lost, and we need methods and tools to render these dream narratives comprehensible.

First, we can take the classical and well-trodden path and explain dream imagery through the immediate context in which the text is embedded. This is the simplest and standard *modus operandi* and often the most promising. If we are, second, dealing with allegorization, we have to refer to medieval biblical commentaries and encyclopedias. A third promising strategy is to draw from medieval art: miniatures, statues, and even architecture can display a significant similarity to a dream image. Additionally, we can obtain valuable information from a recent vast research project dealing with Germanic superstition, from motif indices,<sup>10</sup> from studies on Christian culture, and also from medieval imagery.

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**8** Pfaffe Lambrecht, *Alexanderroman. Mittelhochdeutsch/Neuhochdeutsch*, ed. and trans. Elisabeth Lienert (Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam Jun., 2007).

**9** Among the numerous works discussing the dream motif in medieval literature, the following should be mentioned: R. H. Bloch, "A Study of the Dream Motif in the Old French Narrative" (see note 1); Hans Joachim Kamphausen, *Traum und Vision in der lateinischen Poesie der Karolingerzeit*. Lateinische Sprache und Literatur des Mittelalters, 4 (Bern and Frankfurt a. M.: Peter Lang, 1975); Klaus Speckenbach, "Von den troimen: Über den Traum in Theorie und Dichtung," *Sagen mit Sinne: Festschrift M. I. Dietrich*, ed. Helmut Rücker and Kurt Otto Seidel. Göppinger Arbeiten zur Germanistik, 180 (Göppingen: Kümmerle Verlag, 1976), 169–201; id., "Handlungs- und Traumallegorese in der Gral-Queste," *Formen und Funktionen der Allegorie: Symposium Wolfenbüttel 1978*, ed. Walter Haug. Germanistische Symposien, Berichtsbände, 3 (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1979), 219–42; Steven R. Fischer, *The Dream in the Middle High German Epic*. Australian and New Zealand Studies in German Language and Literature, 10 (Bern, Frankfurt a. M., and Las Vegas, NV: Peter Lang, 1978); Walter Haubrichs, "Offenbarung und Allegorese, Formen und Funktionen von Vision und Traum in Frühen Legenden," *Formen und Funktionen der Allegorie* (see above), 243–64; Judith Klinger, "Die Poetik der Träume: Zum Erzählen von und mit Traum-Bildern im 'Prosa-Lancelot'," *Der mittelhochdeutsche Prosa-Lancelot im europäischen Kontext*, ed. Klaus Ridder and Christoph Huber (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer, 2007), 211–34.

**10** *Motif-Index of German Secular Narratives from the Beginning to 1400*, ed. Helmut Birkhan, Karin Lichtblau, and Christa Tuczay, 6 vols. (Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2005–2010). The following motifs cover dream and vision: *Mot. D.1812.3.3. Future revealed in dream*, and in connection with allegorical dreams *D. 1812.33.5. Prophetic dream allegorical*. Unambiguous dreams are classified under *D. 1810.8.3. Warning in dream* and *D. 1814.2. Advice from dream*, *D. 1813.1.4. Dream reveals death of brother (Husband etc.)*.

## (Female) Dreams Are But Shadows

The protagonists' experiences, clearly signposted as dreams by the narrative situation, and their possible interpretations are often indicative of an obvious skepticism on the part of the poets and their critical attitude toward superstition. This stance is also evident in the fact that these dreams no longer contain only ascents to heaven and descents to hell as in hagiographic literature. For instance, in *Erec* (1180/90), Hartmann von Aue rejects the interpretation of dreams when he has Erec pay no attention to his dreams upon his departures for the courtly world determined by 'Joie de la court': "Swaz im getroumen mahte, / dar ûf hete er dehein ahte" (Whatever his dreams, he did not take the heed).<sup>11</sup> Parzival in Wolfram von Eschenbach's eponymous romance (ca. 1205) has a nightmare after failing to answer the question indirectly put to him at the castle holding the Grail,<sup>12</sup> but he does not consider it to be prophetic, although he dreams of sword blows and battles.<sup>13</sup>

Erec is one of many examples of a literary character who does not believe in prophetic dreams. The same view is taken by Siegfried in the *Nibelungenlied* when Kriemhilt has foreboding dreams, which reveal his fate. In many Middle High German literary narratives, the fulfillment of dreams is a favorite topic. The belief that some dreams come true or that there are principally dreams that become reality is also prevalent. In Konrad von Würzburg's *Trojanerkrieg* (around 1270) the prophet Helenus's belief in dreams is not only merely defamed as being a quack, but it is also ridiculed as an old wives' superstition that is unbecoming of a knight:

Wer sollte an riters muote  
 Sîn durch phaffen tröume laz?  
 Manheit stât werden mannen baz  
 Danne ein gar verzagter lîp.

<sup>11</sup> Verses 8126–8127; Also, in the *Rolandslied*, v. 7463; see *Das Rolandslied des Pfaffen Konrad*, ed. Carl Wesle. 3rd ed. Peter Wapnewski. Altdeutsche Textbibliothek, 69 (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer, 1985); in the *Nibelungenlied*, Hagen ridicules Uote's dream. *Das Nibelungenlied* (see note 7), 1510, 1–4.

<sup>12</sup> On the nightmare and its medieval and classical interpretations, see my article: "Alb – Buhlteufel – Vampirin und die Geschlechter- und Traumtheorien des 19. Jahrhunderts," *Vampirismus und magia posthuma im Diskurs der Habsburgermonarchie*, ed. Christoph Augtustynowicz and Ursula Reber (Vienna: LIT, 2011), 199–222.

<sup>13</sup> Wolfram von Eschenbach, *Parzival*. Auf der Grundlage der Handschrift D, ed. Joachim Bumke. Altdeutsche Textbibliothek, 119 (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 2008), 245, 9–23.



An tröume sol ein altez wîp  
Gelouben unde ein ritter niht.<sup>14</sup>

[What use have brave knights for a cleric's dream interpretation? Such weakness is unmanly. Believing dreams is for old women, not for knights.]

Contempt for old women as interpreters of dreams increases sharply from the thirteenth century onwards.<sup>15</sup> The Stricker (first half of the thirteenth century), generally critical of superstition, has the poor king in *Der arme und der reiche König* (the poor and the rich king) respond to his rich counterpart as follows:

Welt ir grozze richeit mit iuern troumen bejagen,  
so sult irs alten wiben sagen;  
die sageniu wærlichen, daz ir sælich und riche werdet und dar zu alt.  
Der frum ist danne trivalt.<sup>16</sup>

[If you want to earn great wealth because of your dreams, you have to speak with old women. They tell you that you will be blessed, gain riches, and grow old. You will have a threefold win.]

In *Das Elsässische Trojabuch* (1375), Andromache has a prophetic dream: when Hector goes into battle, he will be slain. The desperate wife tells her husband about it, he becomes angry and refuses to believe her. Priam is inclined to listen and forbids the battle for the day. But Hector demands that his armor and horse be brought, although Andromache, Hecuba, Helena, and his sister fall to their knees, begging him to stay. When he mounts his horse, Andromache tears at her clothes in despair. Even Priam tries to hold him back, but in vain. And the well-known fate takes its course (Fig. 1).

In the *Nibelungenlied* Siegfried also downplays Kriemhilt's foreboding dream, and it is not clear if Siegfried's disbelief in prophetic dreams is due to his overbearing masculinity or the misogyny of which the author has often been accused.

<sup>14</sup> Konrad von Würzburg, *Der Trojanische Krieg*, nach den Vorarbeiten K. Frommanns u. F. Roths, ed. Adelbert von Keller. Bibliothek des Litterarischen Vereins in Stuttgart, 44 (1858; Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1965), 19180–85.

<sup>15</sup> Guntram Haag, *Traum und Traumdeutung in mittelhochdeutscher Literatur: Theoretische Grundlagen und Fallstudien* (Stuttgart: S. Hirzel, 2003), 133–43.

<sup>16</sup> Der Stricker, *Fünfzehn kleine Verserzählungen. Mit einem Anhang: Der Weinschwelg*, ed. Hanns Fischer. Altdeutsche Textbibliothek, 53 (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 2016), 151–57.



**Fig. 1:** Andromache tells Priamos her dream, in Martinus Opifex, *Der Trojanische Krieg* (ca. 1450)

## The Influence of Dreambooks

A very important interpretative tool, although some researchers<sup>17</sup> flat-out deny its influence on literature, is the medieval dreambook. In Gottfried of Strasburg's

<sup>17</sup> See Speckenbach, "Von den troimen" (see note 9).

*Tristan* (1210) we hear how Isold's mother is an expert at magic and interpreting dreams through her books:

Und also ez nahten began,  
 diu wise frâgete unde sprach  
 umbe ir tohter ungemach  
 ir tougenlîche liste,  
 daz sî in ir troume gesach  
 daz ez niht alsô geschach,  
 alsô der lantschal sagete. (9302–9309)<sup>18</sup>

[At nightfall the wise mother (the elder Isold) consulted her secret dreambook to find out what would happen to her daughter.]

In the late medieval novella, *Johan uz dem Virgiere* (1400/50; John of the Orchard),<sup>19</sup> the eponymous hero, a prince who had been a foundling as a little child and was raised by an emperor who then involuntarily insults him, leaves the emperor's court and after many adventures finds his true father, a king. In a conflict with the emperor, he asks his father and the lords to come with him to Rome to meet the emperor and reminds him of a promise he has given. The king says he is already too old to undertake such a journey, but he will help Johan enforce his demand by raising a big army (2961). In the meantime, the emperor dreams that Johan uz dem Virgiere threatens him with hanging because he has not kept his promise. He asks his daughter, who is clandestinely in love with Johan about the dream. She consults a dreambook, which advises her that the emperor will have to keep his promise, or he will hang. The princess knows that Johan will arrive in three days (2929–94). After all conflicts are solved, Johan marries the emperor's daughter.

In antiquity and also in the biblical context, dream interpretation was largely a male prerogative, whereas in medieval literature a paradigm shift seems to have occurred in that regard.

Dreambooks are divided into four major categories according to function and content: first, a dream chance-book, which can be the Bible or a famous literary work by Homer or Virgil; the content is significant because it is used for

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**18** Gottfried von Stassburg, *Tristan*, ed. Karl Marold, vol. I: *Text* (Berlin and Boston: Walter de Gruyter, 2004); Gottfried von Strassburg, *Tristan*, trans. with an introduction by Arthur Thomas Hatto (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1982). This passage reads slightly differently in other manuscripts.

**19** *Johan uz dem Virgiere, Eine spätmittelhochdeutsche Ritterdichtung*, ed. Robert Priebsch. Germanistische Bibliothek, Abt. II, 32 (Heidelberg: Winter, 1932).

bibliomancy,<sup>20</sup> i.e., the book is opened randomly and the lines thus discovered are arbitrary and useless for interpretation. The second dream tool, a dream lunar, provides a list of dream interpretations for each day of the lunar month according to the phases of the moon. The content is only of secondary significance and the interpretation is therefore restricted to general statements. This lunar dreambook is therefore inapplicable to medieval literature since it is doubtful that a medieval author would employ a dream with greater emphasis on the lunar phase, its interpretation being valid for only one day of the lunar month.

The third category or group are the dreambooks proper, representing by far the largest corpus of medieval dreambooks, which are divided into three subcategories: the dreambook compilation by Pascalis Romanus (twelfth century),<sup>21</sup> the Arabic dreambook of the Pseudo-Achmet (tenth century),<sup>22</sup> along with Leo Tuscus's Latin translation, (ca. 1160),<sup>23</sup> which spread throughout Europe in the late twelfth century, and the most famous, the *Somniale Danielis*,<sup>24</sup> which is also mentioned in the medieval *Alexander* romance: Jadus, the Jewish high-priest had been had been advised by an angel of God to welcome Alexander, therefore he leads him into Jerusalem. In the temple, he has the book of Daniel brought before him, and prophesizes that a Greek king<sup>25</sup> will defeat Persia (*Der große Alexander*, ca. 1375), 1003–1020.<sup>26</sup>

**20** On bibliomancy, see Christa Agnes Tuczay, *Kulturgeschichte der mittelalterlichen Wahrsagerei* (Berlin and Boston: Walter de Gruyter, 2012), 189–214.

**21** Maria Mavroudi, "Occult Science and Society in Byzantium: Considerations for Future Research," *The Occult Sciences in Byzantium*, ed. Paul Magdalino and Maria Mavroudi (Geneva: Pomme d'Or, 2006), 84–85; Kathryn L. Lynch, *The High Medieval Dream Vision: Poetry, Philosophy, and Literary Form* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1988), 74–75; Steven Kruger, "Medical and Moral Authority in the Late Medieval Dream," *Reading Dreams: The Interpretation of Dreams from Chaucer to Shakespeare*, ed. Peter Brown (1999; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999, 2002), 51–83; here 55 and 57.

**22** *The Oneirocriticon of Achmet: A Medieval Greek and Arabic Treatise on the Interpretation of Dreams*, trans. and ed. Steven M. Oberhelman (Lubbock, TX: Texas Tech University, 1991); Elizabeth Sirriyeh, *Dreams and Visions in the World of Islam: A History of Muslim Dreaming and Foreknowing* (London and New York: I. B. Tauris, 2015), 108–17; John C. Lamoreaux, *The Early Muslim Tradition of Dream Interpretation* (New York: State University of New York Press, 2002).

**23** Charles Homer Haskins, "Leo Tuscus," *The English Historical Review* 33 (1918): 492–96.

**24** Lawrence T. Martin, ed., *Somniale Danielis* (see note 4).

**25** *Alexanderroman. Mittelhochdeutsch/Neuhochdeutsch*, ed. Elisabeth Lienert (Stuttgart: Reclams Universal Bibliothek, 2007).

**26** *Der große Alexander (Wernigeroder Alexander)*, ed. Gustav Guth. Deutsche Texte des Mittelalters, 13 (Berlin: Herzog, 1908).

Steven R. Fischer elaborates: “[...] The *somnia Danielis*, which derives from the Greek dreambook tradition [...] has proven itself to be the medievalist’s primary tool for the identification and interpretation of dream topoi in medieval literature, a task all too often and too hastily placed upon an ultimate Greek source, the *Oneirocriticon* of Artemidoros.”<sup>27</sup> The latter, Artemidoros of Daldis (ca. 135–200 C.E.), was the most famous of dreambook authors, with a far-reaching reception, who integrated older dream interpretations into his book, combining them with his own experiences. During the Middle Ages, his dreambook was only known in Greek and Arabic manuscripts or indirectly through Leo Tuscus’s Latin translation of Achmet’s *Oneirocritica*, but there were also the famous *Somnium Scipionis* and the commentaries by Macrobius. Chrétien the Troyes in his *Erec et Enide* (6709) and Geoffrey Chaucer in the *Nun’s Priest Tale*, but also in the *House of Fame* and in *Troilus and Criseyde*, refer explicitly to the latter.<sup>28</sup>

Jacque Le Goff offers the following summary: “Broadly speaking, the difference between pagan and Christian dream interpretation was this: the ancients based their interpretations on the dream’s structure and content [...], whereas Christians adopting far less widely accepted the Stoic tradition, gauged the value of a dream by its source (God, Satan or the human body).”<sup>29</sup>

## Healing, Incubation, Dreams

Incubation or sleep in a god’s or a hero’s sanctuary, later by the shrine to a saint at a pilgrimage site, is based on the idea that certain places or times in combination with certain (ritual) acts are conducive to receiving particularly revealing dreams. The practice was on the one hand one of oneiromantia, i.e., mantic dreaming, and on the other hand iatromantia. In classical antiquity there were certain temples where individuals who battled diseases or other issues in order to receive, via their dreams, advice, medications, and therapies from the god imagined as being present. This practice connected reception of a directive for the future with a certain place and attached immense value not

<sup>27</sup> See Fischer *The Dream in the Middle High German Epic* (see note 9), 28.

<sup>28</sup> See Chrétien de Troyes, *Erec and Enide*, trans. with intro. and notes by Dorothy Gilbert (Berkeley Los Angeles, CA, and London: University of California Press, 1992), 263; Muriel Bowden, *A Reader’s Guide to Geoffrey Chaucer* (New York: Farrar, Strauss and Giroux, 1964), 104.

<sup>29</sup> Jacques Le Goff, *The Medieval Imagination*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (1955; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), 238. For a strong but convincing critique of Le Goff’s approach, see Scott L. Taylor’s contribution to this volume.

only to the dreams experienced there, but also to the place itself as a sphere of communication between gods, saints, and other people. Various gods and their sanctuaries functioned as communication partners, for instance Asclepius, Serapis, Amphiorus, and Trophonius.<sup>30</sup> Particular significance was attached to the sanctuaries of the god Asclepius (especially in Epidaurus), who like his father Apollo was the god not only of health but also of the mantic sphere.<sup>31</sup> He sent those seeking advice and the sick dreams effecting treatment or even sudden healing. This remained a popular practice among the lower classes well into the Christian era, when it was continued via substitution of the Christian saints of healing, Cosmas and Damian (from the fourth century on), Cyrus and John and Saint Thekla. In the Christian context, the practices were strictly monitored by ecclesiastical institutions to guard against the omnipresent danger of demonic influence.

The function of the classical Asclepius was thus assumed in the Middle Ages by the saints in the healing dream of Christianity. In contrast to the pagan cult, veneration of relics played an important role in the Christian system of healing and miracles. In the seventh century, the patriarch of Jerusalem, Sophronius, documented not only the miracles of the physician saints Cyrus and John, but especially the cult of relics as part of the healing process. The relics held in monasteries and churches ensured the health of both pilgrims and patients. The sick slept inside of the church, as close to the relics as possible.<sup>32</sup>

The fourth category comprises the physiological dreambooks that sought healing for ailments in dreams.<sup>33</sup> In Ulrich von Türrheim's *Rennewart* (ca. 1243), a blind child dreams that its blindness can be cured after drinking "from the

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**30** See Carl A. Meier, *Der Traum als Medizin: Antike Inkubation und moderne Psychotherapie* (Zürich: Daimon, 1949), 63–122; Ludwig Deubner, *De Incubatione* (Leipzig: B. G. Teubner, 1900), 14; Manfred Wacht, "Inkubation," *Reallexikon Antike und Christentum*, ed. Ernst Dassmann, vol. 18 (1998), 179–265.

**31** Maximus of Tyrus received a visual and auditive vision of the god Asclepius in a state between waking and dreaming. Robert M. Berchman, "Arcana Mundi: Prophecy and Divination in the *Vita Mosis* of Philo of Alexandria," *Society of Biblical Literature Seminar Papers Missoula Montana* 27 (1988): 385–423; here 396.

**32** See Dorothea Zeppezauer, *Krankheitskonzepte in der Hagiographie, Krankheitsdeutung in der postsäkularen Gesellschaft: Theologische Ansätze im interdisziplinären Gespräch*, ed. Günter Thomas and Isolde Karle (Stuttgart: Verlag W. Kohlhammer, 2009), 263; Romedio Schmitz-Esser, *Der Leichnam im Mittelalter. Einbalsamierung, Verbrennung und die kulturelle Konstruktion des toten Körpers*. 2nd ed. *Mittelalter-Forschungen*, 48 (2014; Ostfildern: Thorbecke, 2016); an English trans. by Albrecht Classen and Carolin Radtke is forthcoming.

**33** See *The Complete Medieval Dreambook: A Multilingual, Alphabetical Somnia Danielis Collation*, ed. Steven R. Fischer (Bern and Frankfurt a. M.: Peter Lang, 1982).

bones” of the holy relic. When the protagonist Willehalm pours water over them, the child drinks and is cured (35841–71).<sup>34</sup>

In Konrad of Würzburg’s *Engelhard* (ca. 1260 or 1270; first printed in 1573),<sup>35</sup> the hero Dietrich is stricken by leprosy. He loses his hair, beard, and eyebrows, his eyes turn yellow, his skin becomes red, his voice hoarse, his hands and feet deformed. He suffers horribly. Courtiers are in grief. Everyone, even his own wife, avoids him. No doctor is able to help him: there is no cure. Dietrich, too ill to rule his duchy, retires to a little house built for him on a beautiful island in the river nearby. One day, as he lies asleep beneath his beautiful fountain, God sends an angel in his dream to reveal a remedy for his illness: he will be cured by bathing in the blood of his friend Engelhard’s children. Although at first Dietrich does not agree to the sacrifice, Engelhard insists and eventually the children are prepared for the sacrifice. Engelhard beheads them and heals Dietrich with their blood. Then God works a miracle and the children are alive again in their beds. The motif of the blood-cure is very similar to Hartmann’s legendary romance *Der Arme Heinrich* (1190/1200) (5136–5622) but the dream vision with the angel as messenger and advisor for the blood cure is missing. Here the story argues traditionally with God’s angel, while Hartmann mentions a Salerno physician as advisor for the cure.

## Dreams and/or Visions or Dream Visions

The lexical field of dreams often displays some overlap with that of sleep, Indo-European *\*oner* Greek *oneiros* and *suopniom*, Latin *somnium*, and Old High German/Middle High German *troum* Germanic *\*drauma*, either illusion or spectre. It is likely that every single period in history has been fascinated not only with the meaning of dreams, but also with their relationship to future events in the life of the dreamer,<sup>36</sup> be they spoken messages or a series of images and symbols

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34 Alfred Hübner: *Ulrich von Türlheim. Rennewart*. Deutsche Texte des Mittelalters, 39 (Berlin: Weidmann, 1938).

35 Konrad von Würzburg, *Engelhard*, ed. Ingo Reiffenstein, trans. Klaus Jörg Schmitz. Göppinger Arbeiten zur Germanistik, 501 (Göppingen: Kümmerle, 1989); Rüdiger Brandt, *Konrad von Würzburg, Kleinere epische Werke*. 2nd rev. and expanded ed. Klassiker Lektüren, 2 (Berlin: Erich Schmidt, 2009).

36 Hesiod understands the dream as a son of the dark night, brother of the hated death and the black earth as sleep and passing away. Hesiod, *Theogony and Works and Days: A New Critical Edition*, ed. Kimberly Johnson (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2017), v. 211. Numerous publications have been devoted to the topic of the classical dream. An older

requiring interpretation. As a universal anthropological phenomenon with many documented interpretative techniques, dreams were often a professionally established art and a recognized aspect of official religion during antiquity, as oneiro-mantia, before becoming a more marginalized practice in Christianity. Dream motif<sup>37</sup> with concurring interpretations can thus be considered a collective substrate, whereas others are intercultural wandering narratives with different contexts. Dream narratives provide insights into the cultural ‘underworld’ or, closer to our topic, the nocturnal sides to the human psyche and hence remain, quite rightly, a focus of cultural studies, especially within the context of imagination and fantasies.

Anyone could interpret their own dreams, but professional interpreters, be they of intellectual repute or commercial artists and mountebanks at markets and festivals, offered their services within sanctuaries or more directly. Rulers surrounded themselves with interpreters and astrologers who were permanently on hand. It must be emphasized here that classical interpretations of dreams did not aim to explore the personality of the dreamer. The purpose was rather to transpose onto the waking world information such as the dream narrative itself, biographical details of the dreamer, his living environment etc.—in short, the words and pictures of the dream world, with the help of various procedures based on analogy—in order to determine their specific meaning for a given dreamer. This is well demonstrated by the only classical dreambook to have survived, that of Artemidor of Daldis<sup>38</sup> from

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study that remains worth reading is Bernhard Büchsenschütz, *Traum und Traumdeutung im Altertum* (1868; Wiesbaden: Sändig, 1967). A good summary and bibliography is provided by Marco Frenschkowski, “Traum I. Religionsgeschichtlich,” *Theologische Realenzyklopädie* 34 (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2002), 28–50; here 28; see also Dieter Harmening, “Traumbücher, Traumdeutung,” id., *Wörterbuch des Aberglaubens* (Stuttgart: Reclams Universal Bibliothek, 2005), 424–26.

**37** In his classic study of philosophy, *The Greeks and the Irrational*, first published in 1951, Dodds insisted that cultural patterns and dream types should be researched. Eric Robertson Dodds, *The Greeks and the Irrational* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1951), 107.

**38** See the comprehensive study of Christine Walde, “Dream Interpretation in a Prosperous Age? Artemidorus, the Greek Interpreter of Dreams,” *Dream Cultures: Explorations in the Comparative History of Dreaming*, ed. David Shulman and Guy G. Stroumsa (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press 1999), 121–42; also eadem, *Antike Traumdeutung und moderne Traumforschung* (Düsseldorf and Zürich: Artemis and Winkler, 2001); and eadem, *Die Traumdarstellungen in der griechisch-römischen Dichtung* (Munich and Leipzig: K.G. Saur Verlag, 2001); Gregor Weber, *Kaiser, Träume und Visionen in Prinzipat und Spätantike*. Historia, Einzelschriften, 143 (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2000); A good collection of the most important ancient dreams can be found in *Träume in der Antike*, ed. Marion Giebel (Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam jun., 2006); as to the motif of shipwreck, see Paulus Enke, “Ein geträumter



the second century C.E. The *Motif-Index* records it under F1 *Journey to other world as dream or vision (Tundalus)*.<sup>39</sup>

Once we are certain of the textual identity of a dream, we have to determine what type of dream it is. For the medieval audience there were several types, each with its own particular meaning. The undisputed authority on dreams and dreaming was Macrobius (385/390–after 430), who informs us in Chapter 3 Section 2 of his comment in *Somnium Scipionis* that there are five types of dreams: first, there is the nightmare or *insomnium* and the *visum* or apparition. Then there is the prophetic vision or *visio*, a premonitory dream in which future events are seen precisely as they will occur and therefore require no interpretation, while the *oraculum* is a dream in which a person or only the voice of a person reveals something to the dreamer and suggests what action to take or avoid. This only leaves the dream or *somnium* as the sole type to provide the medieval poet with the several options for poetic variation; it is also the most widely employed type of dream in medieval European literature.

A common feature of visions and dreams is that both can appear as a dream. Hence Peter Dinzelbacher<sup>40</sup> employs the term dream vision, since some visionaries by their own account could not distinguish between their own states of consciousness. However, a further distinction must be made: it has to be determined whether the story is a vision, a dream, or a dream vision.

In the *Rolandslied* (Ospinel episode – ca. vv. 1320/40; that is: 509, 28),<sup>41</sup> Olyver's (sic) sister Alde has a vision of her brother, who tells her to leave the country with him and Roland. Upon waking, she sends for a priest. A bishop takes her confession, she makes her confession, and is absolved (138–39).

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Schiffbruch: Zu einem antiken Traummotiv in Testament Naphtali 6 und Artemidors Oneirokritika unter Bezugnahme auf Apostelgeschichte 27," *Traum narrative. Motivische Muster – Erzählerische Traditionen – Medienübergreifende Perspektiven*, ed. Christa Agnes Tuczay and Thomas Ballhausen. Wissenschaftliche Veröffentlichungen der Internationalen Kulturwissenschaftlichen Gesellschaft, 2 (Vienna: Praesens Verlag, 2018), 73–94.

<sup>39</sup> *Motif-Index* (see note 10); *Visio Tnugdali*. Lateinisch und Altdeutsch, ed. Albrecht Wagner (Erlangen: Andreas Deichert, 1882); "Albers Tundalus," ed. R. Sprenger, Ph.D. diss. Halle 1875, 344–543; see also Brigitte Pfeil, *Die Vision des Tnugdali' Albers von Windberg*. Literatur- und Frömmigkeitgeschichte im ausgehenden 12. Jahrhundert. Mikrokosmos, 54 (Frankfurt a. M. and Berlin: Peter Lang, 1997).

<sup>40</sup> Peter Dinzelbacher, *Vision und Visionsliteratur im Mittelalter*. Monographien zur Geschichte des Mittelalters, 23 (1981, Stuttgart: Anton Hiersemann, 2017); Peter Dinzelbacher, *Mittelalterliche Visionsliteratur: Eine Anthologie* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1989); Bettina Krönung, *Gottes Werk und Teufels Wirken: Traum, Vision, Imagination in der frühbyzantinischen monastischen Literatur*. Millenium Studies, 45 (Berlin and Boston: Walter de Gruyter, 2014).

<sup>41</sup> Karl Meinet, ed. Adelbert von Keller. Stuttgart literarischer Verein, 45 (1858; Stuttgart: Litterarischer Verein Stuttgart, 1971).

In the romance *Reinfrid von Braunschweig* (ca. 1291),<sup>42</sup> the eponymous hero prays to Holy Mary, and she appears to him in a vision. Having second thoughts about the nature of the dream or vision, God's mother has to appear to him three times before he believes in the prophecy. At this point the author himself enters the discussion, stating that Ezechiel saw marvels, John saw the apocalypse, Paul saw heaven in his ecstasy, as did the prophet Samuel. So Reinfrid commits himself to travel to the Holy Sepulcher.

In Alber's *Tundalus* (ca. 1190),<sup>43</sup> the procedure of the soul leaving the body during a vision is described in vivid terms. God sends Tnugdelus's guardian angel to rescue the soul from devils. They protest furiously and insist on Tnugdelus's sins such as belligerence, pride, vanity, and adultery. Although Tnugdelus never pays any attention to his angel, God has the angel show him the miraculous places of the other world. Thus, Tnugdelus is finally reformed and later relate his visions to others. (v. 2150) The soul follows the angel and the devils leave, lamenting their loss (344–543). In Rudolf von Ems's *Der guote Gerhard* (1220–1254),<sup>44</sup> his prayer is answered, and an angel appears in his dream, admonishing him to give his wealth to the poor and thus obey God's commandment (1821–1880).

## Theological Dream Discourses and Their Reception in Secular Literature

Even more explicit trances, visions, dreams, and their interpretation gain importance in the *Prose Lancelot* (ca. 1250). The protagonist himself is often led to perform ambiguous feats by his trances and dreams, as are other actors of the romance, male or female alike. The clear striving for disambiguation in the theological discussion of dreams is particularly evident in those works containing discourses of the spiritual or worldly role of the heroic knight.<sup>45</sup>

<sup>42</sup> *Reinfrid von Braunschweig*, ed. Karl Bartsch. Bibliothek des Litterarischen Vereins in Stuttgart, 109 (Tübingen: Litterarischer Verein Stuttgart, 1871).

<sup>43</sup> Brigitte Pfeil, *Die Vision des Tnugdalus* (see note 39).

<sup>44</sup> Rudolf von Ems, *Der guote Gêrhart*, ed. John A. Asher. Altdeutsche Textbibliothek, 56 (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer, 1956). See now Albrecht Classen, *An English Translation of Rudolf von Ems's Der guote Gêrhart* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Press, 2016).

<sup>45</sup> Speckenbach's great merit was his drawing attention to the complex and entwined dream stories and dream discourses in *Prosa-Lancelot*. Klaus Speckenbach, "Handlungs- und Traumallegorese in der 'Gral-Queste'," *Formen und Funktionen der Allegorie. Symposium Wolfenbüttel 1978*, ed. Walter Haug. Germanistische Berichtbände, III (Stuttgart: Metzler,

The *Prose Lancelot* still represents a major challenge for research on medieval literature. The intrinsic structure and the many different strands of the narrative as well as the story's retrospect and prospects render the voluminous work confusing. Interestingly enough, the romance contains twenty-eight significant dreams embedded in the course of action which are not only constitutive for the plot but also assist its progression.

Those dreams in the *Prose Lancelot*<sup>46</sup> are allegorical and theorematic (directly predictive) dream visions, all of which quite conventionally concern important, high-status figures. These personalities, otherwise mainly found in the genre of legends, contain demands and warnings, while the puzzling allegorical dreams usually point to the future, and the difficulties of interpretation not only are outlined in detail but also represent a stylistic and plot-shaping element. Indeed, particularly in the case of the *Lancelot* narrative, one might speak of an "oscillation between signifier and signified,"<sup>47</sup> since the dense significance seems to resist constantly the reduction to its tropes. The poet clearly enjoys playing with all mantic dream discourses before switching to a magical procedure for the final interpretation. The effect of the many dream narratives and their protracted path to interpretation and fulfillment lies not in the symbolic character of their dream signs, but in the signs themselves, which "have to take on a plurality of meanings in order not only to denote the future but to remain valid within it, namely for each specific case of interpretation."<sup>48</sup> Only one of the (primarily) allegorical dreams is a "roguish dream" (1, 593, 24–26) caused by Morgane's magic and hence should not be considered a genuine

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1979), 219–42; Speckenbach, "Form, Funktion und Bedeutung der Träume im Lancelot-Gräl-Zyklus," *I sogni nel medioevo*, ed. T. Gregory. Seminario internazionale Roma, 2–4 (Rome: Edizioni dell'Areneo, 1985), 317–55; here 320; see also Stephan Fuchs-Jolie, "Bedeutungssuggestion und Phantastik der Träume im 'Prosa-Lancelot'," *Das Wunderbare in der arthurischen Literatur: Probleme und Perspektiven*, ed. Friedrich Wolfzettel. Schriften der internationalen Artusgesellschaft, 5 (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer, 2003), 313–40.

<sup>46</sup> As to the category 'theorematic or directly predictive,' see Artemidor, *The Interpretation of Dreams* (see note 3), 1.2.1; *Lancelot*. Nach der Heidelberger Pergamenthandschrift Pal. Germ. 147, vol. I. ed. Reinhold Kluge. Deutsche Texte des Mittelalters, 42 (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1948). *Lancelot*. Nach der Kölner Papierhandschrift W. f 46\* Blankenheim und der Heidelberger Pergamenthandschrift Pal. Germ. 147, vol. II, ed. Reinhold Kluge. Deutsche Texte des Mittelalters, 47 (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1963); *Lancelot*. Nach der Heidelberger Pergamenthandschrift Pal. Germ. 147, vol. III, ed. Reinhold Kluge. Deutsche Texte des Mittelalters, 63 (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1974).

<sup>47</sup> Jens Heise, *Traumdiskurse – Die Träume der Philosophie und die Psychologie* (Frankfurt a. M.: Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag, 1989), 66.

<sup>48</sup> See Speckenbach, "Form, Funktion und Bedeutung der Träume im Lancelot-Gräl-Zyklus" (see note 45) 313–40; here 39.

truth dream even though it influences the plot, is also interpreted as an allegory, and contains religious-didactic elements.

Artus dreams in three separate nights that he has lost his hair, fingers, and toes. Shocked, he summons experts to offer their interpretation, forbidding them from leaving Kamalot until they have provided him with one. They prophesize that the king will lose status and his empire unless he receives the help of “waßerlueffe unde der arczat an arczenye bim ride von der blümen helfen warden” (1, 224, 1–2) But the worldly wise themselves cannot unravel this riddle, and so Artus summons an eleventh highly spiritual man, who issues a warning concerning the king’s sinful life on earth. Galahot’s two dreams, or a double dream, providing a contrast with the three dreams of the king, also require elaborate interpretation. This is only achieved by the final expert, who uses conjuring to predict that Galahot’s end is nigh. Galahot eventually succumbs to his death as a result dies of grief, thinking that Lancelot has died. (597).

In a nightmare, Ginover sees Lancelot betray her with a virgin. In her dream she then confronts Lancelot, who claims to know nothing of the virgin, however. Ginover does not believe him and sends him on his way (2, 227). Here too we have a case of a double dream, since at the same time, Lancelot has his ‘roguish dream’ due to Morgana’s potion (2, 238, 18–21). Although Speckenbach considers this to be a physical stimulus dream and not a truth dream, it actually offers fulfillment. He concludes that the poem uses the three types of dream quite arbitrarily, either without meaning, theoremtically or allegorically. Both the interdiscursivity and the supremacy of the blueprint of a spiritual life over a knightly existence anticipated by the characters’ speech confirm *inter alia* the allegorical dreams of Lancelot and Galahot analyzed in such detail by Speckenbach, and support the theory of a rise in spirituality in the post-Classical novel.

## Biblical Dreams and Symbols

The historian Flavius Josephus (ca. 37/38–100) includes in his analysis both Old Testament narratives, and his own and other non-biblical dreams.<sup>49</sup> In his

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<sup>49</sup> Joseph was not only a highly gifted interpreter of dreams, but could also understand equivocal revelations, being familiar with the prophecies of the holy books. Flavius Josephus, *De bello Iudaico*. Griechisch–deutsch, ed. Otto Michel and Otto Bauernfeind, 3 vols. (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1959–1969), III, 8, 3, 349; see Frenschkowski, “Traum” (see note 36), 146–53; Jean-Claude Schmitt, “The Liminality and Centrality of Dreams in the Medieval West,” *Dream Cultures. Explorations in the Comparative History of Dreaming*, ed. David Shulman and Guy S. Stroumsa (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 274–87.

comments on Eleazar, he explains the anticipatory ability of the soul due to the proximity to God offered by sleep.

... for that with which the soul connects lives and flourishes; what it separates from withers and dies – so great is the abundance of immortality residing within it. The clearest proof for this is sleep, in which souls, undisturbed by the body, having withdrawn to themselves enjoy the sweetest peace, communicating with God, to whom they are related, roaming everywhere and foretelling much of the future.<sup>50</sup>

On the fundamental question of true or prophetic versus false, deceptive dreams, late classical dream theories corresponded firstly with the New Testament, secondly the neo-Platonic tradition represented by the writings of Macrobius,<sup>51</sup> and thirdly with the important Greek *oneiromantia*. Truth dreams revealed hidden wisdom and God's counsel, while false dreams deceived via demonic illusions.

The Old Testament contains several interpretations of dreams with religious significance. God alone allows some select individuals to see beyond the limits of the waking world, communicating with them in visions and dreams. False prophets often speak of a vision emanating from one's own heart and not from the mouth of God, and hence only the virtuous can understand dreams, while the other dreams consider illusions to be truth dreams.<sup>52</sup>

With its much lower number of dreams, the New Testament provided less room for interpretation. Matthew and Luke were particularly interested in dreams. A striking characteristic, the angel as dream messenger supports the significance of the dream as a source of theological leadership. The wish, the physical stimulus, and unclear dreams considered by Artemidor are completely absent, since in the case of an unambiguous dream message only the virtuous evangelists were presumably capable of experiencing it. God does not even speak directly with them, but communicates via mediator figures such as the angels, who pass on individual messages. Despite the differences to the Old Testament understanding, they remain fundamental. For instance, in Acts (Acts 2:17–18) Peter, in his Sermon on Pentecost, cites the words of the prophet Joel (2:28) that daughters prophesize, young men see visions, and old men dream.<sup>53</sup>

Hence the interpretation of dreams no longer remained the preserve of professional dream interpreters, but was reserved for charismatic personalities. A

<sup>50</sup> Flavius Josephus, *De bello Iudaico* (see note 49), VII, 8,7, p. 661.

<sup>51</sup> On the medieval reception of Macrobius, see Albrecht Hüttig, *Macrobius im Mittelalter: Ein Beitrag zur Rezeptionsgeschichte der Commentarii in Somnium Scipionis*. Freiburger Beiträge zur mittelalterlichen Geschichte, 2 (Frankfurt a. M.: Peter Lang, 1990).

<sup>52</sup> Marco Frenschkowski, "Traum und Traumdeutung im Matthäusevangelium. Einige Beobachtungen," *Jahrbuch für Antike und Christentum* 41 (1998): 5–47.

<sup>53</sup> Acts 2.17 after Joel 3.1–2.

gender-specific innovation can also be observed here: women began to play a role as interpreters of dreams and prophets, like the martyr Perpetua, who wrote down her dreams with her brother Saturus in imprisonment in Carthage.<sup>54</sup>

In the early Christian period, characterized largely by visions,<sup>55</sup> every Christian dream was considered significant, and even a false dream could contain an important message about sin and evil. While educated Christians knew from scripture that dreams could contain useful messages and were legitimized by the Bible, attention was increasingly paid to the dangers of false dreams.

On the one hand, there was a tendency to ascribe meaningful dreams to only a select few, drawing on Paul, who had postulated that the ability to distinguish between spirits was a God-given charisma that was not imparted to all Christians. Celsus condemned Christians' trust in dreams and visions, expressing contempt for such credulous individuals as a bunch of half-mad women, swindlers, and victims of treacherous illusions.

The *Rolandslied* (ca. 1170) by the Priest Konrad contains four dreams. Karl's first dream takes place after Ganelon has instructed Roland to leave Spain as commander. Karl did not think much to this advice and instinctively suspected it served a wicked purpose. To gain clarity about his predicament, he asks for God's guidance and lies down to sleep, the implication being that he is hoping for divine inspiration in a dream, which he indeed promptly receives:

Von venien begonde er müden,  
dô wolt er gerne rûwen,  
der slâf in bezuchte,  
aine wîle er entnuchte:  
do troumte im vil gewis,  
wie er wære in porta Cesaris,  
mit ime herren gnûge,  
wie er ain scaft in der hant trûge,  
Genelun nach ime sliche  
unde den scaft ain halp begriffe

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<sup>54</sup> Perpetua's brother advises her to demand a foreboding dream, because she is already in a state of grace which then would predict whether she will become a martyr or be set free. Peter Habermehl, "Perpetua: Visionen im Christentum," *Frauenwelten in der Antike*, ed. Thomas Späth and Beate Wagner-Hasel (Stuttgart and Weimar: Metzler, 2006), 174–82.

<sup>55</sup> Marco Frenschkowski, *Offenbarung und Epiphanie*, vol. 1: *Grundlagen des spätantiken und frühchristlichen Offenbarungsglaubens*. Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament: Reihe 2, 79; here 300–11; *Offenbarung und Epiphanie*, vol. 2: *Die verborgene Epiphanie in Spätantike und frühem Christentum*. Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament, Reihe 2, 80 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1995–1997).

unt wolt im in ûz der hant zucken.  
 Der scaft prast zestucken:  
 Der kaiser ain tail behabete.  
 Genelun virzaget:  
 Siniu stucke warf er widere;  
 Di fûren gegen dem himile  
 In di lufte vil hôch, ne sach nîmen:  
 Di lufte sie enphiengen.  
 Die berge alle der von erschracheten,  
 der kaiser unsamfte erwachete. (3026–3047)

[Growing tired of prostration, he wanted to get some rest and fell asleep: He dreamed that he was in Port Caesarius with an entourage and that he had a lance in his hand. Genelun crept after him and tried to take the lance. It broke and one piece remained in the emperor's hand. Genelun was desperate, throwing away his pieces, which suddenly flew heavenwards and were not seen again. The airs welcomed them and even the mountains were in dismay and the emperor woke up.]

Although the dream is characterized as an enigmatic *somnium*, it is unusual, for Genelun appears in human form and not as an animal as in many allegorical dreams.<sup>56</sup> The interpretation of the lance's breaking as (Genelun's) attempt to seize power, resulting in the destruction of the empire, corresponds with dreambook interpretations.<sup>57</sup> As early as the *Ilias* 16, 114–15, the breakage of a spear pointed to the destruction of Troy. The dreambook relates:

Wem trawmpt, wie er verkyezt,  
 Zubreche oder verliez  
 Gewaffen, der wirt mit schaden  
 In kurzen czeiten vberladen.<sup>58</sup>

[He who dreams that his weapons break or become lost will soon suffer great hardship.]

As far as the earthquake is concerned, which is, incidentally, absent in the French versions, Karl gives no thought at all to its meaning. "Remarkably, Karl does not draw the obvious conclusions from this dream event, makes no effort at all to arrive at a specific interpretation of the dream, but, aware of his sinfulness, begs God to vent his rage not on his people, but on him himself."<sup>59</sup> Indeed, the dream has two purposes: it prophesizes Roland's defeat and death in Roncesvalles and

<sup>56</sup> See Karl-Joseph Steinmeyer, *Untersuchungen zur allegorischen Bedeutung der Träume im altfranzösischen Rolandslied* (Munich: M. Hueber, 1963).

<sup>57</sup> Cf. Fischer, *The Dream in Middle High German Epic* (see note 9), 45–59.

<sup>58</sup> Paul Graffunder, "Daniels Traumdeutungen," *Zeitschrift für deutsches Altertum* 48 (1906): 507–31; here 517.

<sup>59</sup> Wilhelm Schmitz, *Traum und Vision in der erzählenden Dichtung des deutschen Mittelalters* (Münster: Verlag der Aschendorffschen Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1934), 24.

Karl's sustained rule. Afterwards, Karl has another dream in which he imagines he is Aachen and sees before him a bear bound in two chains. The bear looks Karl in the eye and viciously attacks him, shredding his right arm to the bone (3068–3081). In this second *somnium*, Konrad draws more on the traditional allegorization of the bear, in the Bible and spiritual writings a symbol of disloyalty and malice. The Church Fathers interpreted the bear as a symbol of devilish deceit. In the dreambooks, all wild animals represent an enemy, the bear in particular betrayal, while injury to the arms signifies great danger.<sup>60</sup>

Wem von vbeln thier das  
 Trawmpt, wie sie durch irn hasz  
 Mit im vechten vn in wunnten,  
 der wirt von veinden vberwunden.

[He who dreams of wild animals fighting and injuring him will be overcome by his enemies.]

The same holds for the rather unusual interpretation of arms:

Wem trawmpt in des slaffes danck,  
 wie er sey der arme kranck,  
 das bedewt im den tot  
 Oder sunst ein grosse not<sup>61</sup>

[He who dreams that his arms are injured will suffer great hardship or even death.]

## Political Dreams

The analysis of literary dreams usually categorizes them as theorematic and allegorical, or, to use Macrobius's terminology, they usually contain *visa*, that is, allegorical dreams and *oracula*, unambiguous ones. *Vorauer Alexander* (1150/60) adapts the biblical narratives of Daniel's dream of the kings of Media and Persia to the Alexander legends.

diz was den Daniel släfende gesach  
 in einem troume dâ er lach,  
 dâ sah er fechten ainen boc unt ainen wider.  
 Daz bezeichent die zwêne chunige sider. (475–78)

[This was what Daniel saw in his dream: he saw a goat and a ram fighting. That stands for the battle between two kings.]

<sup>60</sup> *Karl der Große von dem Stricker* (see note 6).

<sup>61</sup> Paul Graffunder, *Daniels Traumdeutungen* (see note 58), 507–31; here 517.



A superficial examination of Alexander's highly political dreams would suggest that they merely seem to serve a common cliché: men think, act and even dream politically. But if we delve deeper into Alexander's motivation and the logical outline of the characters, a more differentiated picture emerges. On the eve of the battle with the Persian king Darius, Alexander dreams:

Dâ er in sînem bette lach,  
 in dem troume er ime zô sprah:  
 "Alexander, liebe sune,  
 durh dih bin ih here comen.  
 Ih wil dir lâzen schîn,  
 daz ich ein gewaldich got bin.  
 Ih wil dir sîn bereite  
 zô dûner arbeite.  
 Dir ne mac nieman gescaden,  
 di wil ih dir holt herze tragen.  
 Tû du den rât mîn:  
 Du salt selbe bote sîn  
 hin zô Dario ..." <sup>62</sup>

[When lying in his bed in his dream he exclaimed: "Dear son, I came here because of you. I want to reveal you that I am a powerful god and will support you so that no one can harm you. Act in accordance with my advice and go as a messenger to Darius's court."]

Alexander tells his men the dream and they advise him to follow his father's dream message. He goes to Darius's court, is recognized and only just manages to escape. Why Alexander unnecessarily places himself in danger is quite unclear, because neither his father nor his men order him to do so, nor is it at all necessary. His motivation becomes clearer if we examine the Latin prototype or source: here, instead of his father Philipp, Mercury or the god Amon in the shape of Mercury appears in his dream. The originally politically motivated story refers to Alexander's divine descent and ancestry. Hence Weber concludes that in classical traditions, dreams often narrate cohabitation with a god. In the light of this tradition, Alexander's birth is explained. Tertullian reports that on her wedding night, Alexander's mother dreamed that lightning struck her and penetrated her body. Afterwards, Philipp was advised by the Oracle of Delphi to worship the god Amon in particular. <sup>63</sup>

<sup>62</sup> Pfafe Lambrecht, *Alexanderroman. Mittelhochdeutsch/Neuhochdeutsch*, ed. and trans. Elisabeth Lienert (Stuttgart: Reclams Universal Bibliothek, 2007), vv. 2550–62.

<sup>63</sup> Weber, *Kaiser, Träume und Visionen* (see note 38), 136.

Neither Amon nor Nectanebus appear in his dream, but his father Philipp calls him “son,” which is obviously intended to legitimize Alexander’s controversial genealogy, doubted due to Nectanebus’s deception and the heterochrony of his eyes that are revealed in his mother’s dream.

Upon his return, Alexander meets the messengers of King Darius, who have come to collect tribute from Philippus. Darius is mentioned in the book of Daniel: Daniel dreamed of a billy-goat fighting against a ram; this signified the fight between Darius and the Greek king. Alexander disapproves of his father’s paying tribute. He sends back the messengers and has them tell their king that he will lose his head if he insists on the tribute (467–506).

The dream command is inherent to a certain type of dream and mostly determines actions. Examples are Heinrich of Veldeke’s *Eneas* (1170/1188) but also the courtship story of Oswald. In Veledeke’s *Eneas*, actions due to the dream have an effect on world history, whereas in the Alexander romance only the genealogy is important. It is unclear why Alexander follows his father’s command. (80, 40)

## The Classical Warning in Dreams: The Evil Omen

The revelatory character of certain dreams, assumed since antiquity, remained beyond doubt in the Middle Ages too. The theologians’ message to the dreamers was clear: scripture taught that while all virtuous and upstanding Christians have truth dreams, only the clerics and charismatics are able to test whether they are true. This elaborate dream theology created something that the heathen interpretation of dreams had not sought; a model of the dream process. A select group of truth dreamers, albeit not so much theologians as saints, other religious professionals and high-status individuals, can both dream truth dreams and interpret them.

Wernher der Gartenaere (the Gardener), in his virtually tragic peasant satire *Helmbrecht* (1270/80), adopts a very clear stance on the prophetic dream when he cleverly contrasts the different interpretations by a father and his son.<sup>64</sup> In the first dream, the father, the steward Helmbrecht, sees his son holding two torches that light up the entire countryside. The father interprets the dream as the son’s impending blindness, since he has already had such a truth dream prior to this one (v. 589). The son’s reaction seems typical of his new status; he

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<sup>64</sup> Werner der Gaertner, *Helmbrecht. Mittelhochdeutsch/Neuhochdeutsch*, ed. and trans. by Fritz Tschirch (Stuttgart: Reclam Universal-Bibliothek, 9498), 1974.

dismisses his father's concern as superstitious nonsense.<sup>65</sup> The second, more drastic dream of mutilation – the son lacks an arm and a foot – is interpreted by the father as punishment for property crime, robbery and theft (see Laurin, who threatens anyone who would cross his boundaries with this punishment). Since the father anticipates the son's skepticism, he advises him to seek (professional) interpreters of dreams, "wise people" who are well versed in such readings. The son rejects this too, countering with the interpretation practiced since antiquity: the content of a dream means its opposite; he will have not misfortune but luck: "sælde" (v. 601; good fortune). Here, the son no longer dismisses the dream, but attempts to interpret it himself. When the executioner puts out his eyes and chops off his hand and foot (1687–1691), the dreams are fulfilled as punishment not only for his crimes, but also for his breaking the fourth commandment, concerning the Sabbath<sup>66</sup>; the truth dreams predict the actual court sentences. Quite in keeping with tradition, God, as the giver of truth dreams, is named as the punisher (1639 ff.). There are many instances of such direct divine intervention in the plot (1614ff.): God lends the minions magic powers, they can blind people as an extension of His arm, for when the criminals see them, everything goes black before their eyes and they become powerless, as the old steward had foreseen.

The father's third dream, about flying, can be read in a didactic context. While a flying dream can often be a dream about the beyond,<sup>67</sup> the father refers explicitly to hubris, the *superbia*<sup>68</sup> on the part of the young Helmbrecht. He questions his son's positive interpretation: "sol dir der truom guot sîn?" (v. 609; will the dream bear fruit for you?). The fourth dream, the zenith of the dream narrative, and indeed the tale itself, is reflected upon by the father in his retelling of it with frequent interjections of "owê" (629, 630, 631). This is the steward's last

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65 Ulrich Seelbach, *Kommentar zum "Helmbrecht" von Wernher dem Gartenaere*. Göppinger Arbeiten zur Germanistik, 469 (Göppingen: Kümmerle, 1987). Seelbach understands Helmbrecht's negation and rejection of his father's dreams as a delusion due to his soul's blindness, which prevents him from seeing his future fate, 99.

66 Petra Menke, *Recht und Ordo-Gedanke im Helmbrecht*. Germanistische Arbeiten zu Sprache und Kulturgeschichte, 24 (Frankfurt a. M.: Peter Lang, 1993), 244.

67 Klaus Speckenbach, "Flugträume im Mittelalter," *Hundert Jahre "Die Traumdeutung"*. *Kulturwissenschaftliche Perspektiven in der Traumforschung*, ed. Burkhard Schnepel. Studien zur Kulturkunde, 119 (Cologne: Köppe, 2001), 66–82.

68 Seelbach, *Kommentar zum "Helmbrecht"* (see note 65), 99; Klaus Speckenbach, "Kontexte mittelalterlicher Träume: Traumtheorie – fiktionale Träume – Traumbücher," *Lingua Germanica. Studien zur deutschen Philologie. Jochen Splett zum 60. Geburtstag*, ed. Eva Schmitsdorf, Nina Hartl, and Barbara Meurer (Münster, New York, Munich, and Berlin: Waxmann, 1998), 298–314; here 307–09.

attempt to convince his son of the dark prophecy, of the warnings about God's punishment so clearly pronounced in the dream, and thus to persuade him to change his ways. The dream also unveils the shameful present, the son's activities as a robber. Here too, the raven as a harbinger of doom reinforces this reading. Although the son no longer advances a positive take on his father's interpretation, he does not heed the warning.<sup>69</sup> In sum, in the Helmbrecht dreams we can observe various dream discourses: on the one hand a "democratizing tendency"<sup>70</sup> with respect to the interpreter of dreams and at the same time the dreamer, since peasants rarely function as interpreters or indeed dreamers. The reference to wise interpreters of dreams can probably be read as correct behavior on the part of the old peasant, who wishes to remain within his prescribed boundaries.<sup>71</sup> The types of dreams themselves are allegorical and the others can be clearly identified as real (or in Artemidor clear) dreams that come true, as in the dream narrative. The allegorical dream may appear at first glance to be encoded, but the old peasant argues with an analogous dream vision in which the interpretation pointed to blinding and which proves correct in the case of his son. The young Helmbrecht had probably heard of antinomy as an interpretive option, and again proves it to be correct.

In the *Elsässische Trojabuch* (1375),<sup>72</sup> Ulis (Odysseus, or Ulysses) dreams of a beautiful maiden, but when he tries to embrace her, she rejects him, warning him that one of them has to die if they fulfill their desire. The next morning, he sends for his interpreters to reveal the dream's meaning. When they tell him that his son wants to kill him, he has him imprisoned in a strong tower. As he does not think of his other son with Circe, Theolgonus, eventually the prophetic dream becomes reality, despite his vain attempts to prevent his foretold fate. A similar sequence of events is portrayed by Albrecht in his *Jüngerer Titurel* (1272/94); in the story of Lohrgring, one of Parzival's children dreams of a thousand

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69 Helmbrecht (see note 64): "Ob dir nû, vater, wizze Krist, / troumte allez daz der ist, / beide über unde guot / ich gelâze nimmer mînen muot/hinnen unz an mînen tût" (635–39).

70 Jacques Le Goff, *The Medieval Imagination* (see note 29), 232–42.

71 The established pattern in dream and visionary literature for warning dreams meaning to relate to the dream is deliberately neglected here by the author because of the "zentralen Konfliktpartner Helmbrechts im epischen Geschehen und als den weltanschaulichen Opponenten gegen die von der zentralen Figur vertretene Haltung gegenüber der Gesellschaft." See Peter Göhler, "Konflikt und Figurengestaltung im 'Helmbrecht' von Wernher dem Gartenaere," *Das Märe: Die mittelhochdeutsche Versnovelle des späten Mittelalters*, ed. Karl-Heinz Schirmer. Wege der Forschung, 558 (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1983), 384–410; here 391 (first published in: *Weimarer Beiträge* 8 [1974]: 93–116).

72 *Das Elsässische Trojabuch*, ed. Christoph Witzel. Wissensliteratur im Mittelalter, 21 (Wiesbaden: Reichert Verlag, 1995), 195.

swords against him and awakes to find the relatives of his wife wounding him with their swords. The knight dies of his wound and Pelaie dies of grief for her husband's death. Lohrangrine's identity is disclosed and the land Liasperie changes its name to Lutringen. A monastery is built on the site of Lohrangrine's and Pelaie's tomb (5991–6051).

Often, wild and dangerous animals announce that the protagonist will have a perilous adventure or even face death. This is the case in Heinrich of Türlin's *Diu Crône* (ca. 1225),<sup>73</sup> where Gasozein and Gawein fight each other fiercely. Finally, when Gawein overcomes Gasozein, the two knights are so weary that they fall asleep on the battlefield (12062–12238). Gawein dreams that he has ridden out from Karuin very early one morning and has encountered a wild boar grazing, which fiercely attacks him. It inflicts many wounds on him before he kills it with his spear. The pain startles him and he realizes that it is a dream. At the same time, Gasozein has a foreboding dream in which he drowns. After a long discussion about the meaning of their dreams, they eventually ride off to Karidol (vv.12239–12405).

## Female Dreams: Mothers' and Wives' Foreboding Dreams

In Lambrecht's *Alexander* romance (1150/60), Alexander's mother, Olympias, dreams of a child who will conquer the world. The dream is an introductory to the narrative. Before Alexander's birth, during her pregnancy she sees oneiric images:

Ein ouge was ime wieden,  
getân nâh einen trachen.  
Daz quam von den sachen:  
Dô in sîn mûter bestunt ze tragene,  
dô quâme ir freisliche bilide ingagene,  
daz was ein michil wunder. (158–163)<sup>74</sup>

[One eye looked like a dragon. That was due to a certain reason: his mother had seen a horrifying image when pregnant; that was a great wonder.]

<sup>73</sup> Heinrich von dem Türlin, *Diu Crône. Kritische mittelhochdeutsche Leseausgabe mit Erläuterungen*, ed. Gudrun Elder (Berlin and Boston: Walter de Gruyter 2012).

<sup>74</sup> Elisabeth Lienert translates "troum bilide" as "oneiric image," or "dream-vision." Lambrecht, *Alexanderroman* (see note 62), 562; to Alexander's appearance in relation to Olympias's dream, see also Benjamin van Well, *Mir troumt hînaht ein troum* (see note 5), 54–68.

The queen obviously dreams of dragons and griffins and Alexander's appearance receives a feral imprint. Research has interpreted Olympias's nightmare as a proto-natural-scientific treatise on the origin of deformity.<sup>75</sup>

There is some discussion in Alexander romance research in relation to the question as to whether the dream changes the appearance of the hero. Macker<sup>76</sup> argues for a desymbolization of the feral character. Because the animality of Alexander has a pseudo-scientific explanation such as external circumstances, the appearance of the future king becomes more common; the audience does not need an understanding of symbols, but anticipates the visual appearance. With the emphasis of this pseudo-scientific explanation, Alexander's image is dissociated from his original superhero, supernatural image, while Lienert in his diverse interpretations sees a sign of Alexander's singularity. Seemann analyses the symbols and comes to the conclusion that the feral characteristic of the hero has a referential function,<sup>77</sup> while Bien elaborates that even in Greek and Roman Antiquity, it was believed that the visual fantasy of the pregnant mother could shape the infant at the moment of conception.<sup>78</sup> Even in the later Alexander romances (thirteenth century onwards), his visual appearance is explained by the fact that the sorcerer Nectanebos is his real father, who came to his mother in the shape of a snake; Udo Friedrich observes, "Auch weil Olympias in Schlangengestalt im Akt der Zeugung das Bild des tierähnlichen Geliebten wahrnimmt, kann der Embryo die entsprechende göttlich-animalische Prägung erhalten"<sup>79</sup> (It is also because Olympias in the form of a snake perceives the image of the animal-like lover in the act of procreation that the embryo can obtain the corresponding divine-animal imprint).

This ubiquitous rumor that the observance of a horrible or exciting incident like a fire during pregnancy can cause a dark red birthmark in the infant still

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<sup>75</sup> Elisabeth Lienert, Lambrecht, *Alexanderroman* (see note 62), 22.

<sup>76</sup> Christoph Mackert, *Die Alexandergeschichte in der Version des 'Pfaffen' Lambrecht. Die frühmittelhochdeutsche Bearbeitung der Alexanderdichtung des Alberich von Bisinzo und die Anfänge weltlicher Schriftepiik in der deutschen Sprache*. Beihefte zur Poetica, 23 (Munich: Fink, 1999), 130–31.

<sup>77</sup> Veronika-Rosa Seemann, "Der wunderliche Alexander. Die Funktion der Tiersymbolik in der Beschreibung des Aussehens Alexanders des Großen in Lambrechts Alexanderlied," *Spinnenfuß und Krötenbauch: Genese und Symbolik von Kompositwesen*, ed. Paul Michel. Schriften zur Symbolforschung, 16 (Zürich: PANO Verlag, 2013), 133–60.

<sup>78</sup> G. Christian Bien, *Erklärungen zur Entstehung von Missbildungen im physiologischen und medizinischen Schrifttum der Antike*. Sudhoff's Archiv, Beiheft, 38 (Tübingen: Steiner, 1997), 82.

<sup>79</sup> Udo Friedrich, *Menschentier und Tiermensch: Diskurse der Grenzziehung und Grenzüberschreitung im Mittelalter*. Historische Semantik, 5 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 2008), 80.

exists; in combination with a divinatory dream<sup>80</sup> it would rather point to an ineradicable superstition that has been prevalent since Antiquity. The other argument suggests that Alexander's hybrid animal character is inherent because of the dream, shaping not only his external but also his internal character.<sup>81</sup>

Schulz argues that the perception by one's social environment is based on the fundamental assumption that people's appearance, their social exterior, understood as the combination of clothes, skin and hair, is inextricably linked with their internal "core" or their True Being.<sup>82</sup>

Another aspect of Alexander's hybridity is that not only is he compared to a dragon, a reference to his real father, Nectanebos, but his other father, the king of Macedonia, allegedly dreamed during his wedding night that he had imprinted the queen's body with a lion seal.

Alexander's animal metaphors refer not only to his overwhelming power, aggression and anger, but also to his qualities as a warrior. His figure is as ambiguous as the colors of his eyes. The dragon, indicative of the apocalypse, is a symbol of chaos, cruelty and the demonic; it stands for death, evil, horror itself, its rampant brutality and relentlessness. The griffin eyes are an indication of Alexander's greed, his pride, hubris, and superbia.

In the complicated courtship story of *King Rother* (ca. 1160/70),<sup>83</sup> Constantin, the father of the princess who is in love with Rother, wants to marry her to a heathen king for political reasons. When she refuses, her father tries to persuade her by telling her his warning dream:

Do sprach Constantin:  
 "nu swic tochter min!  
 Mir troumte nachte von der

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**80** David Williams, *Deformed Discourse: The Function of the Monster in Medieval Thought and Literature* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1996), 107. This ubiquitous belief that a horrible incident like a fire during pregnancy can cause a dark red birth mark in the infant still exists until today. Folk belief has commonly attributed deformation and miscarriage to nightmares. See also Ulrike Enke, "Mißgeburt," *Enzyklopädie der Medizingeschichte*, ed. Werner E. Gerabek, Bernhard D. Haage and Wolfgang Wagner (Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2005), 997–99; here 997.

**81** Markus Stock, "Figur: Zu einem Kernproblem historischer Narratologie," *Historische Narratologie. Mediävistische Perspektiven*, ed. Harald Haferland and Matthias Meyer. Trends in Medieval Philology, 19 (Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2010), 187–203; here 192.

**82** Armin Schulz, *Erzähltheorie in mediävistischer Perspektive*, ed. Manuel Braun, Alexandra Dunkel, and Jan-Dirk Müller. De Gruyter Studium (Berlin and Boston: Walter de Gruyter, 2012), 41.

**83** *König Rother*, Mittelhochdeutscher Text und neuhochdeutsche Übersetzung von Peter K. Stein, ed. Ingrid Bennewitz, Beatrix Koll and Ruth Weichselbaumer (Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam Jun., 2000).

Des saltu wol gelvbin mir–,  
 We ein valke quame  
 Gevlogen von rome  
 Und vorte dich widir over mere.” (3852–3856)

[Constantine said: “Peace daughter, be still. Last night I dreamt, believe me, that a falcon came from Rome and took you over the sea.”]

The falcon refers to King Rother anticipating the princess’s rescue. This dream triggers a chain reaction. The dream story leads the conversation to Rother, whom the heathens threaten to drown in the sea if he returns. This provokes the queen to defend him in a speech. After that, Rother, who is hiding under the table, gives the princess a ring with his name engraved on it. The princess laughs, knowing Rother is present. The heathens become aware of him and Konstantin concludes that he cannot flee but has to surrender. Then the king of West Rome and his company arrive. Like Alexander’s, it is a prophetic dream and also a legitimation dream, since West Rome reigns over Byzantium. It is close, then, to political propaganda. The symbol of the falcon allows a threefold interpretation: it is a symbol of power, of love and of sovereignty because of the new king Rother; of the love of the courting king Rother and the emperor’s daughter, who is in love with him. This marriage or relationship is not only erotic but also political: from the erotic union follows a political love that will unite the two Romes.

In the anonymous romance *Reinfried von Braunschweig* (ca. 1291) the skeptical protagonist doubts his vision of Holy Mary, but after three manifestations he believes in his prophetic dream. His wife Yrkâne does not need triple confirmation when she dreams of taking out a hawk she had trained to hunt, whereupon two eagles appear that eventually seem to have killed it. Here the dream is not only highly important but also leads to a theoretical discourse between the part the couple on dream interpretation: She wants Reinfried to interpret the dream, comparing this request with that of Joseph’s to Solomon and Daniel’s to Nebuchadnezzar (13315–699). In another foreboding, she dreams that an old lion has left her and she keeps a young lion for comfort. Yrkâne tells Reinfried the dream and asks for his interpretation. Reinfried interprets the old lion as himself and the young one as his son. Yrkâne demands that the day and date be written down so that no doubt shall fall on the child’s legitimacy (14883–15049).



## The Alleged Dream as a Method for Female Machinations

The belief in dreams as prophetic can be of good use as an evasive strategy or also in female scheming. In *Wolfdietrich A* (ca. 1230),<sup>84</sup> the king wishes to have his son exposed to the wilderness. The queen tries to prevent it and tells the king that she has foreseen in a dream that the boy will win a queen and a kingdom. If he has a kingdom, then he is to leave his inheritance to his brothers, who are even forced to swear they will give him no part of the inheritance (59–70).

Queen Salme, generally depicted as treacherous and deceptive in *Salman und Morolf* (ca. 1200),<sup>85</sup> claims to have dreamed a symbolic dream, the decoding of which allows but one interpretation however, which she immediately offers herself:

Mir troumte hînt in dieser nacht  
Daz ich an dînem arme entslief  
Und mir sô liebe nie beschach.  
Zwên valken flugen mir ûf die hant.  
Der troum der ist mir wol erkant.  
Daz ist ein sune loebelîch,  
der sol nâch dir besitzen  
dîn vil wîtez kunigrîch (534–35)

[I had a dream this night that I fell asleep in your arm and never felt such a love. Two falcons flew on to my hand. I know that kind of dream: I will bear a wonderful son and he will inherit your great kingdom.]

Quite apart from the arbitrary reinterpretation of her invented falcon dream, this dream can be categorized as an announcement dream, as can Hecuba's torch dream,<sup>86</sup> which Cassandra correctly interprets as the birth of Paris and the

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**84** *Ortnit und Wolfdietrich: Two Medieval Romances*, trans. and with an intro. by J. W. Thomas. *Studies in German Literature, Linguistics, and Culture*, 23 (Columbia: Camden House, 1986); *Ortnit und Wolfdietrich D*. Kritischer Text nach Ms. Carm. 2 der Stadt- und Universitätsbibliothek Frankfurt a. M., ed. Walter Kofler (Stuttgart: S. Hirzel, 2001); *Wolfdietrich B*. Paralleledition der Redaktionen B/K und H, ed. Walter Kofler (Stuttgart: S. Hirzel, 2008); *Ortnit und Wolfdietrich A*, ed. Walter Kofler (Stuttgart: S. Hirzel, 2009).

**85** *Salman und Morolf*, ed. Alfred Karnein. *Altdeutsche Textbibliothek*, 85 (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer, 1979).

**86** The torch dream originates from the late classical Trojan tradition. Kern presumes an analogy to the oracle of Laios, which led to the abandonment of Oedipus. Manfred Kern, "Hecuba," *Lexikon der antiken Gestalten in den deutschen Texten des Mittelalters*, ed. Manfred Kern and Alfred Ebenbauer and Sylvia Krämer Seifert (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2003), 278–81; here 280. The dragon dream in *Prosa-Lancelot II* 599 (see note 46), 598–600; 601, 8–15; Speckenbach,

destruction of Troy. In Otte's *Eraclius* (twelfth century), Cassinia prays for a son, promptly receiving via an angel not only confirmation that her wish shall be granted, but also advice regarding conception (228–36, and 265–66) (518–26). The queen begs Solomon to spare her life. She pretends to regret her infidelity and promises to return to Jerusalem. Morolf catches Fore and Salome and presents the latter to Solomon. Morolf leads both to the gallows. Salome accuses Fore of having bewitched her, claiming that she is innocent. Fore then accuses her of infidelity, but she relates the prophetic dream she had the night before: she was in Solomon's arms and two hawks flew from her head. She is convinced that it was their future son, who will inherit Solomon's kingdom.

While Salome uses her invented dream to achieve her aims, the sorceress Morge (Morgana) even goes a step further by inducing dreams in the protagonist, her prisoner (*Lancelot* II 267–70). Although she tries hard to make Lancelot forget the queen, her attempts even lead to more confusion and chaos. While Lancelot dreams that the queen lies in a tent with another knight and his intervention is stopped by the queen, who claims that the knight is her new lover, at the same time far away the queen dreams something similar: she sees Lancelot enter her chamber in the company of a pretty damsel; the queen wants him to lie with her but the damsel stays by his side. The queen attacks the girl, but Lancelot protests that he does not know anything about her. Yet the queen declares she will no longer love him or meet him. Lancelot turns mad and runs away clad only in his shirt (*Prose Lancelot* II 226–28).<sup>87</sup>

In the verse novella (*maere*) *Der Reiher* (The Heron; thirteenth century), a husband is led to believe that he dreamed he was being duped by his wife, who has another woman pretend to be her in the bed. The *Motif Index* explicitly records the story under Motif no. K 1512: *The cut-off nose (braids). The woman leaves the husband's bed and has another woman take her place. The husband addresses her, receives no answer and cuts off her hair (nose). In the morning the wife still has hers; the husband is made to believe that he was dreaming, that he is insane.*

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“Von den troimen” (see note 9), 169–204; here 188–92, and id., “Form, Funktion und Bedeutung der Träume im Lancelot-Gral-Zyklus” (see note 45), 316–56; here 327–34.

<sup>87</sup> Although the story of the queen Ginover's dream is told before Lancelot is benumbed and has his induced dream, it takes place at almost the same time.

## Conclusion

While the clichéd image of a dream lover who appears in one's dreams and one day is met in reality is still a well-loved motif in songs and movies, it is rather rare in medieval literature, although we do encounter it in Johann of Würzburg's *Wilhelm von Österreich*,<sup>88</sup> in which the Goddess Venus sends a dream thus predestinating the young nobles (741–819).

In some romances and epics, the heroes dismiss foreboding dreams as irrational and hence due to female superstition and naïveté, but most of the texts analyzed contain oracular dreams and their fulfillment. The dreamers not only believe their foreboding dream, be they male or female, but often seek advice from professional interpreters too.

One dream motif, that of the alleged dream, is employed by female characters, either showing the evil character of the femme fatale Salome or rather, depending on the context, the principal lack of power of medieval women, whose cunning differs, due to their restricted scope for action, from the insidiousness and unscrupulousness of a male character like Morolf.<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> Johann von Würzburg, *Wilhelm von Österreich*. Aus der Gothaer Handschrift, ed. Ernst Regel. Deutsche Texte des Mittelalters, 3. Rpt. (1906; Dublin and Zürich: FB&C LTD, 1970).

<sup>89</sup> I am especially grateful to Albrecht Classen's infinite patience in editing this study and his very useful suggestions, to Thomas Willard for his critical comments in the last round, and last but not least to my dear colleague John Heath for his help with my translations.



Scott L. Taylor

## ***Monstra nobiscum: Medieval and Early Modern Teratology and the Confluence of Imaginatio and Scientia***

In his 1985 study, *L'Imaginaire médiéval*, Jacques Le Goff made the rather bold pronouncement that medieval men and women had greater difficulty than we do in drawing a boundary between material reality and imaginary reality.<sup>1</sup> I say “bold” because on its face it suggests that the denizens of the medieval world were possessed not only of a certain cultural alterity, but an actual cognitive alterity. Needless to say, were this literally true, our task in understanding the people of the Middle Ages would be greatly magnified if not rendered all but impossible. It is worth considering therefore whether differences in the medieval imagination indeed describe some sort of variance in cognitive function, merely conform to the particularities of medieval culture, or are largely reflective of technological capacities.

In this regard, Le Goff was of little help, since he virtually concedes his inability to define “imagination”; instead, in Pseudo-Dionysian fashion, undertaking to define it apophatically. According to Le Goff, imagination is not representation, which he contends is any mental image of a perceived external reality. Nor is imagination symbolism, which refers to any underlying system of values. Finally, imagination is not ideology, which, as Le Goff contends, distorts both material reality and imaginary reality by imposing upon them a particular *Weltanschauung*. To confound his definition further, he concedes that imagination can overlap with any of these other concepts.

Not only is such a definition of imagination incapable of operationalization, but frankly so is his concept of “material reality,” which he never undertakes to define at all. Further, his entire approach seems contradictory to basic cognitive psychology. Yet, having said all that, the underlying question remains, was the medieval imagination somehow different in type from our own, or simply different in content.

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<sup>1</sup> Jacques Le Goff, *L'imaginaire médiéval: essais*. Bibliothèque des histoires (Paris: Gallimard, 1985), translated as *The Medieval Imagination*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1988), 6.

In attempting to analyze this issue, I propose that imagination be conceived in a fashion similar to Sukorov's *voobrahenzie*,<sup>2</sup> literally the process of "image-making," as a basic cognitive act of all human beings, and consistent with the working-definition of imagination adopted by Pelaprat and Cole, derived in part from Vygotsky,<sup>3</sup> as "the process of resolving and connecting the fragmented, poorly coordinated experience of the world so as to bring about a stable image of the world,"<sup>4</sup> a perspective that dovetails with the Nietzschean extension of Kant's epistemology wherein all language can be regarded as metaphor. It also, *chez* Sukarov, emphasizes the future-oriented nature of imagination as a culturally mediated psychological function, albeit largely ontogenetic, compared with "creativity" which is primarily socio-historical.

With this definition in mind, this paper discusses a particular subset of *mirabilia* – that category of phenomena defined by Gervase of Tilbury as "quae nostrae cognitioni non subjacent etiam cum sint naturalia" (those things not subject to our understanding though they be natural),<sup>5</sup> and sometimes called the praeternatural – as the realm of imagination wherein fantasy and science interface through the medium of intuition. More particularly, it will examine the medieval conceptualization of congenital abnormalities within four different aspects of "imagination": (1) the "theological," being the original sense of the word *monstrum*, wherein such anomalies or *prodigia* represented a divine *portentum*, whether beneficent or punitive, requiring interpretation; (2) the "folkloric," whether *fabula* or *superstitio*, suggesting a minimal basis in the physical world; (3) the "intuitive," suggesting rational insight and extrapolation from empirical data (*cognitio*); and (4) a specific theory of teratogenesis at least as old as Pliny the Elder based on maternal (or occasionally, paternal) imprinting or impressions. The reason for choosing teratology

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2 Alexander V. Suvorov, "The Formation of Representation in Deaf-Blind Children," *Journal of Russian and East European Psychology* 22. 2 (1983): 3–28.

3 Lev S. Vygotsky, "Imagination and Creativity in Childhood," *Journal of Russian and East European Psychology* 42.1 (2003): 7–97; and *The Psychology of Art* (1925; Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2003).

4 Etienne Pelaprat and Michael Cole, "Minding the Gap: Imagination, Creativity, and Human Cognition," *Integrative Psychological and Behavioral Science* 45 (2011): 397–418; here 399. <http://lchc.ucsd.edu/MCA/Paper/ETMCimagination.pdf> (last accessed on Feb. 10, 2020).

5 Otia imperialia, ed. Gottfried W. Leibniz. *Scriptores Rerum Brunsvicensium Illustrationi Inservientes, Antiqui Omnes Et Religionis Reformatione Priores: Opus in Quo Nonnulla Chronica Hujus Vicinarumque Regionum Præsertim Ostfaliae, Res Etiam Atestinorum Longobardiae Et Guelforum Superioris Germaniae, Vitae Item Hominum Illustrium, Aut Principum ... Continentur*, Cura G.g. Leibnitii (Hanover: Nikolaus Förster, 1707), 960. As he continues "Sed & mirabilia constituit ignorantia reddendae rationis, quare sic fit" (But also, mirabilia constitutes ignorance of rational reflection as to why it is so).

to explore the possibility of cognitive differences between medieval and modern people regarding the relationship of imaginary reality and material reality, perhaps we should say “empirical reality,” is two-fold.

The first advantage to teratology as a focus for such examination is the relatively slow development of knowledge concerning birth anomalies which allows us to observe whether there is a correspondingly slow change in cognition concerning such defects that would indicate that the difference is not between medieval and modern cognitive imaginations, but rather a difference in data and the technology that can collect that data, obviating Le Goff’s claim that medieval people were essentially gullible. Indeed, I propose to show in the first instance that medieval theories regarding teratogenesis were essentially continuations of classical opinions, whether borrowed from Aristotle, Pliny, Galen, Augustine, or other ancient sources, such that the real inquiry is into similarities or differences in premodern versus modern cognition.

Second, monstrosity holds a certain potential for universality as well as particularity; or phrased somewhat differently, to the extent monsters occur through natural processes, it may be possible to extrapolate from empirical data. As Augustine himself notes in *De civitatis Dei*, if there be monsters among us, then why should there not be monstrous races, though he does not assert that such is true, and indeed, as Strabo before him,<sup>6</sup> he appears more than passingly skeptical of those who assert the existence of such wonders. As he writes:

Suppose, nevertheless, that these stories handed down about various races who differ from one another and from us are true, although if we were not aware that apes, and monkeys, and sphinxes are not men, those historians would possibly describe them as races of men, and flaunt with impunity their false and vainglorious discoveries. But if they be men of whom these marvels are recorded, so what if God has seen fit to create some races in this way, that we might not suppose that the monstrous births which appear among ourselves are the failures of that wisdom whereby He fashions the human nature, as we speak of the failure of a less perfect workman? Accordingly, it ought not to

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<sup>6</sup> See, e.g., Strabo, *Strabonis Geographica*, ed. August Meineke (Leipzig: Teubner, 1877), Bk. 7, ch. 3, sec. 6; here 410–11, where commenting on the inventions of Homer’s *Odyssey*, 4.84, he observes: “οὐ θαυμαστὸν δ’ εἶναι περὶ Ὀμήρου: καὶ γὰρ τοὺς ἔτι νεωτέρους ἐκείνου πολλὰ ἀγνοεῖν καὶ τερατολογεῖν, Ἡσίοδον μὲν Ἡμίκυνας λέγοντα καὶ Μεγαλοκεφάλους καὶ Πυγμαίους, Ἀλκμᾶνα δὲ Στεγανόποδας, Αἰσχύλον δὲ κυνοκεφάλους καὶ στερνοφθαλμούς καὶ μονομμάτους καὶ ἄλλα μυρία” (Nor should this be surprising in Homer, for those who have lived more recently than he, having been ignorant of many things, told marvelous tales: Hesiod of Hemicyns, Megalocephali, and Pygmies; Alcman of Steganopodes; Æschylus of Cynocephali, Sternophthalmi, and Monommati, and countless others).

seem absurd to us, that as in individual races there are monstrous births, so in the whole race there are monstrous races.<sup>7</sup>

Now exactly what Augustine considered to be monstrous is uncertain. Various conditions such as uneven arms or legs, or simply the crippling of a limb, were explainable by adherents of the peripatetic school as a consequence of too much or too little seed, injury in the womb, defects of the womb itself, etc. The anomalies Augustine does describe are generally malformations of the hands or feet, whether polydactyly, syndactyly, or ectrodactyly; conjoined twins whether ischiopagus or thoracopagus; and hermaphroditism. Those who bear these malformations which he himself claims to have witnessed are all obviously human and are so acknowledged by Augustine. He remains skeptical of Skiapodes and Cynocephali, although also of pygmies, not having seen equivalent monstrous births, though he does not deny their possible existence. Therefore, it is worth enquiring whether such hybrids or equivalent monsters such as Cynocephali, had been seen by reliable medieval witnesses, though the very issue of credibility is largely inseparable from the theoretical cognitive framework that had been largely inherited from the ancients, and particularly, albeit not exclusively, from the Graeco-Romans.

Undeniably, many of the stories of monsters, whether in popular lore, or seamen's tales, or certainly in later and more sophisticated works by such writers as Mandeville or Marco Polo, as I have argued elsewhere,<sup>8</sup> must be understood in terms of a genre of the marvelous, itself in large part a legacy of the classical world, much as Ovid's *Metamorphoses* is to be comprehended in terms of Alexandrian genre poetry, and hence as creative works rather than cognitive

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7 " ... si tamen uera sunt quae de illarum nationum uarietate et tanta inter se atque nobiscum diuersitate traduntur. Nam et simias et cercopithecus et sphingas si nesciremus non homines esse, sed bestias, possent illi historici de sua curiositate gloriantes uelut gentes aliquas hominum nobis inpunita uanitate mentiri. Sed si homines sunt, de quibus illa mira conscripta sunt: quid, si propterea Deus uoluit etiam nonnullas gentes ita creare, ne in his monstros, quae apud nos oportet ex hominibus nasci, eius sapientiam, qua naturam fingit humanam, uelut artem cuiuspiam minus perfecti opificis, putaremus errasse? Non itaque nobis uideri debet absurdum, ut, quem ad modum in singulis quibusque gentibus quaedam monstra sunt hominum, ita in uniuerso genere humano quaedam monstra sint gentium." *De ciuitate Dei*, ed. Bernhard Dombart. Bibliotheca scriptorum Graecorum et Romanorum Teubneriana (Leipzig: Teubner, 1877), L. XVI, cap. 8; here 137.

8 Scott L. Taylor, "Merveilles du Monde: Marco Millions, *Mirabilia*, and the Medieval Imagination, or the Impact of Genre on European *Curiositas*," *East Meets West in the Middle Ages and Early Modern Times: Transcultural Experiences in the Premodern World*, ed. Albrecht Classen. Fundamentals of Medieval and Early Modern Culture, 14 (Berlin and Boston: Walter de Gruyter, 2013), 595–610.



assertions. Accordingly, these reports can largely be deemed within what we have termed the “folkloric” aspect of imagination. Assuredly, the ancients recognized the scope of poetic license in relating tales of wonder. As Galen would write regarding Pindar’s description of Ixion, who having been tricked by Zeus into mating with a cloud, sired Centaurus who in turn bred with the Magnesians mares to produce the race of centaurs:<sup>9</sup>

“Sed ô pindare, tibi quidem cantare, & fabulari concedemus: scientes poeticum musam non minus quam alia propiis ornamentis, & miraculo egere. Obstupefacere enim & admirationem velut attonitos reddere vultis, opinior & allicere auditores non docere.”<sup>10</sup>

9 “χρή δὲ κατ’ αὐτὸν αἰεὶ παντὸς ὄραν μέτρον. // εὐναὶ δὲ παράτροποι ἐς κακὸν αἰὲρ ἄθροαν / ἔβαλον: ποτὶ καὶ τὸν ἱκόντ’: ἐπεὶ νεφέλα παρελέξατο, / ψεῦδος γλυκὺ μεθέπων, αἰδρις ἀνήρ: / εἶδος γὰρ ὑπεροχωτάτα πρέπεν οὐρανια / θυγατέρι Κρόνου: ἄντε δόλον αὐτῷ θέσαν // Ζηνὸς παλάμαι, καλὸν πῆμα. τὸν δὲ τετράκναμον ἔπραξε δεσμόν, / ἐὼν ὀλεθρον ὄγ’: ἐν δ’ ἀφύκτοις γυιοπέδαις πεσὼν τὰν πολυκοινων ἀνδέξατ’ ἀγγελίαν. / ἄνευ οἱ Χαρίτων τέκεν γόνον ὑπερφιάλον, / μόνα καὶ μόνον, οὐτ’ ἐν ἀνδράσι γερασφόρον οὐτ’ ἐν θεῶν νόμοις: / τὸν ὀνύμαζε τράφοισα Κένταυρον, ὃς // ἵπποισι Μαγνητίδεσσι ἐμίγνυτ’ ἐν Παλίου / σφυροῖς, ἐκ δ’ ἐγένοντο στρατός / θαυμαστός, ἀμφοτέροις / ὁμοῖοι τοκεῦσι, τὰ ματρώθεν μὲν κάτω, τὰ δ’ ὑπερθε πατρός” (A man must always measure all things according to his own place. Unnatural lust throws men into dense trouble; it befell even him, since the man in his ignorance chased a sweet fake and lay with a cloud, for its form was like the supreme celestial goddess, the daughter of Cronus. The hands of Zeus set it as a trap for him, a beautiful misery. Ixion brought upon himself the four-spoked fetter, his own ruin. He fell into inescapable bonds and received the message that warns the whole world. She bore to him, without the blessing of the Graces, a monstrous offspring – there was never a mother or a son like this – honored neither by men nor by the laws of the gods. She raised him and named him Centaurus, and he mated with the Magnesians mares in the foothills of Pelion, and from them was born a marvelous horde, which resembled both its parents: like the mother below, the father above). Pindar, Pythian Ode 2 [ΙΕΡΩΝΙ ΣΥΠΑΚΟΣΙΩ ΑΡΜΑΤΙ], *The Odes of Pindar Including the Principal Fragments, with an Introduction and an English Translation by Sir John Sandys* (London: Heinemann, 1937), 172–74; this translation is by Diane Arnson Svarlien, 1990, for the Perseus Digital Library of Tufts University; online at: <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0161%3Abook%3DP.%3Apoem%3D2> (last accessed on March 10, 2020).

10 Galen, *De usu partium corporis humani libri xvii*, III.1. In the original Greek: “ἀλλ’, ὦ Πίνδαρε, σοὶ μὲν ᾄδειν τε καὶ μυθολογεῖν ἐπιτρέπομεν, εἰδότες τὴν ποιητικὴν μοῦσαν οὐχ ἥκιστα τῶν ἄλλων τῶν οἰκείων κόσμων καὶ τοῦ θαύματος δεομένην· ἐκπλήξαι γὰρ οἶμαι καὶ κληῖσαι τοὺς ἀκροατάς, οὐ διδάξαι βούλεσθαι.” Galenus, ed. Carl G. Kühn, and Friedrich W. Assmann. *Opera Omnia*. Vol. 3. Medicorum Graecorum opera quae exstant, 3 (Leipzig: Cnobloch, 1822), 170–71; Latin version taken from Galen, *De usu partium corporis humani: magna cura ad exemplaris Graeci veritatem castigatum, universo hominum generi apprime necessarium*, ed. and trans. Nicolaus Rheginus (Paris: Simon de Colines, 1528), 64–65. English translation quoted and discussed in Ernst Robert Curtius, *Europäische Literatur und lateinisches Mittelalter* (Bern: A. Francke, 1948), translated as *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages*, trans. Willard R. Trask. Bollingen Series, 36 (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1953), 478, note 2.

[But to thee, O Pindar, we leave it to sing and to tell myths, for we know that her own ornaments and the marvelous are not the least of the poetic Muse's needs; for, as I believe, she would agitate and enchant and enrapture her hearers, but not teach them.]

Galen appreciated Pindar's poetic genius, but the tale itself was purely balderdash from the medical perspective. One may well judge Galen's assertion that such works do not "teach" as unnecessarily harsh if not entirely Philistine, for such poetry had been used to communicate certain lessons, particularly ethical, since didactic poetry had been fathered by Hesiod in the eighth century before the common era. Galen's dismissal of such myths, however, confirms that some significant portion of the population discounted at least the most outlandish of tales; and in truth, many of Galen's objections to the existence of Centaurs had been anticipated two centuries and more previously by the poet Lucretius.<sup>11</sup> Galen himself did seem to accept the possible existence of some genera of creatures associated with myth and legend such as Cynocephali, albeit not as hybrids but as distinct species.<sup>12</sup> At minimum, it is certainly but right to be skeptical whether Ovid believed that vindictive goddesses were turning unfortunate Actaeons into stags, or beneficent deities were turning virginal Daphnes into trees in order to rescue them from the lecherous clutches of Apollo.

On the other hand, underlying the stories of various monsters and hybrids either observed first-hand or heard about from sources taken as reliable, there also lay a significant element of cognition. For example, when one reads the *Topography of Ireland*, Gerald of Wales, who peppered his writings with quotations from both Pliny the Elder and the Younger, is less concerned with genre and more with creative calumny against the Irish people. But the manner in which he intersperses his stories of hybrids, none of which he claims to have actually seen, and his relation of discrete occurrences of bestial coitus with which he appears to be familiar, leaves little doubt that he believes, contrary to Thijssen's suggestion that in the Middle Ages human/animal hybrids were not

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11 "Sed neque Centauri fuerunt nec tempore in ullo / esse queunt duplici natura et corpore bino / ex alienigenis membris compacta, potestas / hinc illinc partis ut sat par esse potissit. / ... ne forte ex homine et veterino semine equorum / confieri credas Centauros posse neque esse ..." (But Centaurs ne'er have been, nor can there be / Creatures of twofold stock and double frame / Compact of members alien in kind, / Yet formed with equal function, equal force / In every bodily part ... So never deem, perchance, / That from a man and from the seed of horse, / The beast of draft, can Centaurs be composed ...). *De Rerum natura libri sex*, ed. William Ellery Leonard and Stanley Barney Smith (Madison, WI: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1940), Book 5, ll. 878 et seq., 719–20; trans. Carus T. Lucretius, *Of the Nature of Things: A Metrical Translation*, ed. and trans. William E. Leonard (London: J. M. Dent; New York: E. P. Dutton, 1916), 223–34.

12 See, e.g., Galen, *De usu partium*, note 10 above, X.1, 315 et seq.

contemplated,<sup>13</sup> that such *monstra* could not only exist but be the result of unnatural copulations.<sup>14</sup>

This belief set is all the clearer in Peter Damian's letter to abbot Desiderius and the community of Monte Cassino in which he relates a story told to him by Pope Alexander II about a certain Ligurian count William who had acquired a male simian commonly called Maimo.<sup>15</sup> Unfortunately for the count, he was also

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**13** J(ohannes) M. Thijssen, "Twins as Monsters: Albertus Magnus's Theory of the Generation of Twins and its Philosophical Context," *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 61 (1987): 237–46.

**14** Gerald of Wales, *Topographia*, Dist. II, Caps. XXI–XXIV, *Giraldi Cambrensis opera*, ed. J (ohn) S. Brewer, James F. Dimock, and George F. Warner, 10 vols. *Rerum Britannicarum medii ævi scriptores* [Rolls series], 21 (London: Longman & Co., 1861–1891), 5: 108–11. As he explains, "Nec mirandum si de gente adultera, gente incesta, gente illegitime nata et copulate, gente exlege, arte invida et invisa ipsam turpiter adulterante naturam, tales interdum contra naturae legem natura producat. Et digna Dei vindicta videtur, ut qui interiore mentis lumine ad ipsum non respiciunt, hi exterioris et corporeae lucis beneficio plerumque doleant destitute" (Nor is it surprising if among an adulterous people, an incestuous people, a people come together and born contrary to law, a people outside law, deeply and foully, secretly defiling wrongfully nature itself, nature should occasionally produce such as are contrary to natural law. And it seems a fitting divine punishment, that those who do not have regard for this according to the interior light of reason, should suffer deprivation of the benefits of the external and corporeal light), *Topographia*, Dist. III, Cap. XXXV, *Opera* 5:181–82. Of course, Gerald also has an agenda, viz., justifying the English invasion of Ireland, as I discuss in "The Conquest of Sodom: Symbiosis of Calumny and Canon in the *Jus Belli* from Ireland to the Indies," *War and Peace: New Perspectives in European History and Literature, 700–1800*, ed. Albrecht Classen and Nadia Margolis. *Fundamentals of Medieval and Early Modern Culture*, 8 (Berlin and Boston: Walter de Gruyter, 2011), 81–98; here 87. See also Albrecht Classen's respective comments in the Introduction to this volume.

**15** *Petri Damiani Monachi Ordinis S. Benedicti Epistolarum Libri Octo*, ed. Sébastien Cramoisy (Paris: Workshop of Sébastien Nivelles, 1610), Liber II, epist. 18, pp. 246–70. The story of Maimo is related at pp. 269–70 as follows: "Sed et illud nunc subsequenter occurrit, quod mihi domnus Alexander papa necdum emenso, ut ita loquar, mense narravit. Ait enim quia nuper comes Gulielmus in Liguria partibus habitans marem habebat simiae, qui vulgo Maimo dicitur, cum quo et uxor eius, ut erat impudica prorsus ac petulans, lascivius jocabatur. Nam et ego duos eius filios vidi, quos de episcopo quodam plectibilis lupa pepererat; cujus episcopi nos exprimere nomen omittimus, quia notare quemlibet infamia non gaudemus. Cum igitur petulante ferae mulier saepe colluderet, uluis astringeret, amplexibus demulceret, sed et ille nihilominus quaedam libidinis signa praetenderet atque ad nudum illius carnem pertingere quibusdam gestibus anhelaret dixit ei cubicularia sua: Permite, si placet, quidquid vult agere, ut liquido pateat quid nititur attentare. Quid plura? permisit et quod turpe dictu est, cum femina fera concubuit; deinde consuetudo tenuit, et commercium inauditi sceleris inolevit. Quadam vero die dum se comes uxori conjugali more misceret, Maimo protinus concitatus spiritu, super utrumque tanquam zelotypo concitatus spiritu, super utrumque prosiliit: virum velut rivalem brachiis, et acutis unguibus arpaxavit, mordicus apprehendit, et irrecuperabiliter laceravit. Sic itaque Comes extinctus est. Innocens igitur homo dum fidem thalami servat

possessed of a lascivious wife, personally known to Peter Damian, who had borne two sons of a certain bishop Damian prefers not to name. Apparently, when not coitally engaged with the clergy, the count's wife enjoyed cavorting naked with the lecherous simian, until encouraged by her maid she began a pattern of bestial intercourse with the animal. At some point, Maimo witnessed the count in bed with his wife, and in a fit of jealous pique, the simian attacked and killed the count. Damian, while in the company of the Pope, subsequently heard reports of a large mute boy who resembled Maimo and was called by that same name, making him suspect as in fact a monster inhabiting the house of his father.<sup>16</sup>

In some logical sense, in distinguishing between our categories of imagination, hybridity seemingly stands apart from the one-off occurrences of hermaphroditism or of conjoined twins described by Augustine, which in conceptual terms have more in common with Pliny's amphisbaena,<sup>17</sup> which being unexplained and perhaps unexplainable, and thus relatable clearly to the portentous and miraculous, than they do with his corocotta,<sup>18</sup> which is described simply as a case of cross-breeding. Certainly, Aristotle asserted that cross-insemination of any two

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uxori, dum animal suum quotidianis alit impendiis, nil ab utroque suspicatur adversi; nimirum, qui clementiam praebebat officii. Sed, ah scelus! Et femina turpiter jus conjugii violat, et bestia in jugulum domini gladium vibrat."

**16** Ibid.: "Enimvero nuper allatus est praefato papae, et simul et nobis grandiusculus quidam puer; et si jam, ut dicitur, vicennalis, tamen prorsus elinguis et maimoni forma consimilis, ita ut eodem vocabulo nuncupetur. Unde sinistra posset oriri suspicio, si huiusmodi, non iam dicam ferinum, sed feralē portentum paterna tunc aleretur in domo."

**17** Essentially, a snake with two heads, one at each end: "Geminum caput amphisbaenae, hoc est et a cauda, tamquam parum esset uno ore fundi venenum" (The amphisbaena has two heads, that is to say, it has a second one at the tail, as though one mouth were too little for the discharge of all its venom.) *Naturalis Historia* 8.38. In his famous translation and edition of Pliny's natural history, Bostock maintained that this description of a serpent with a head on either end "is obviously incorrect" Pliny, *The Natural History of Pliny*, ed. and trans. John Bostock and Henry T. Riley, 6 vols. (London: H. G. Bohn, 1855–1857), 2:285, note 79. In fact, such two-headed snakes, while rare, are occasionally born; and as Bostock suggests, the name stemming from the Greek ἀμφίσβαῖνα, indicates the ability to move in both directions, which when born, the anomalous reptiles do indeed possess.

**18** Having discussed the hyena, Pliny goes on to describe the corocotta as a cross-breeding of hyena with lion: "Huius generis coitu leaena aethiopica parit corocottam, similiter voces imitantem hominum pecorumque. acies ei perpetua, in utraque parte oris nullis gingivis, dente continuo: ne contrario occurso hebetetur, capsarum modo includitur. hominum sermones imitari et mantichoram in aethiopia auctor est iuba" (Coitus of this genus with the Ethiopian lion produces the corocotta, which likewise imitates the human voice, has a fixed gaze, and has no gums in either part of its mouth, but continuous teeth, which are enclosed in a sort of box lest they be blunted by rubbing together. According to Juba, the Ethiopian mantichora can also imitate human speech). *Naturalis Historia* 8.47. No such hybrid is known to exist. To the extent

species was feasible so long as their nature and their size was not too dissimilar, and their gestation period was equivalent.<sup>19</sup> Consequently, hybridity is arguably no more a divine punishment for the sin of bestiality than bastard births are a punishment for adultery. Insofar as they be a potential hazard of unacceptable conduct, they are nonetheless to be regarded as a natural consequence of a divinely established order.

In contrast to this perspective on bestiality, one need only consider the case of incest, as much a taboo for the ancients of the classical world as a sin for medieval people,<sup>20</sup> but which at least as to siblings, was considered of little

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there is an empirical basis for Pliny's creature, it probably stems from confusion of the smaller striped hyena with the larger, more powerful spotted hyena.

**19** Discussing the contribution of male and female in generation, in the case where members of different species copulate and produce offspring “quod ea faciunt: quorum tempus par & uteri gestatio proxima & corporis magnitudo: non multo discrepans haec primos partus similes sibi ædunt communi generis utriusquam specie quales ex uulpe & cane generantur: aut ex peridice & gallinaceo ... ” (where these things happen in the case of animals whose seasons coincide and whose periods of gestation are similar, and which do not differ widely in physical size, the first generation, so far as resemblance goes, takes equally after both parents, such as the offspring of fox and dog, and of partridge and common fowl ... ). Aristotle, *De generatione animalium libri V* [Περὶ Ζωῶν Γενέσεως]: 2,4; Latin text taken from Aristotle, Theodōros Gazēs, Bartholomeo Zanni, Octaviano Scotto, and Bern Dibner, *Aristotelis De natura animalium libri nouem; De partibus animalium libri quattuor; De generatione animalium libri quing* (Venice: Bartholomeo Zanni, 1498).

**20** Or at least so can be read from Plato's observation in the *Laws*: “**Ἀθηναῖος**: ἴσμεν που καὶ τὰ νῦν τοὺς πλείστους τῶν ἀνθρώπων, καίπερ παρανόμους ὄντας, ὡς εὖ τε καὶ ἀκριβῶς εἴργονται τῆς τῶν καλῶν συνουσίας οὐκ ἄκοντες, ὡς οἶόν τε δὲ μάλιστα ἐκόντες. **Μέγилλος**: πότε λέγεις; **Ἀθηναῖος**: ὅταν ἀδελφὸς ἢ ἀδελφὴ τῷ γένωνται καλοί. καὶ (838β) περὶ υἱὸς ἢ θυγατρὸς ὁ αὐτὸς νόμος ἄγραφος ὢν ὡς οἶόν τε ἱκανώτατα φυλάττει μὴτε φανερώς μὴτε λάθρα συγκαθεύδοντα ἢ πως ἄλλως ἀσπαζόμενον ἄπτεσθαι τούτων: ἀλλ’ οὐδ’ ἐπιθυμία ταύτης τῆς συνουσίας τὸ παράπαν εἰσέρχεται τοὺς πολλοὺς. **Μέγилλος**: ἀληθὴ λέγεις. **Ἀθηναῖος**: οὐκοῦν σμικρὸν ῥῆμα κατασβέννυσσι πάσας τὰς τοιαύτας ἡδονάς; **Μέγилλος**: τὸ ποῖον δὴ λέγεις; **Ἀθηναῖος**: τὰ ταῦτα εἶναι φάναι μηδαμῶς ὅσια, θεομισῇ δὲ (838ε) etc καὶ αἰσχροῦν αἰσχιστα. τὸ δ’ αἴτιον ἂρ’ οὐ τοῦτ’ ἐστὶ, τὸ μηδένα ἄλλως λέγειν αὐτά, ἀλλ’ εὐθύς γεγόμενον ἡμῶν ἕκαστον ἀκούειν τε λεγόντων αἰεὶ καὶ πανταχοῦ ταῦτα, ἐν γελοίοις τε ἅμα ἐν πάσῃ τε σπουδῇ τραγικῇ λεγομένη πολλάκις, ὅταν ἢ Θυέστας ἢ τινὰς Οἰδίποδας εἰσάγωσιν, ἢ Μακαρέας τινὰς ἀδελφαῖς μειχθέντας λαθραίως, ὀφθέντας δὲ ἐτοιμῶς θάνατον αὐτοῖς ἐπιτιθέντας δίκην τῆς ἁμαρτίας” (“**Athenian**: Even at present, as we are aware, most men, however lawless they are, are effectively and strictly precluded from sexual commerce with beautiful persons – and that not against their will, but with their own most willing consent. **Megillus**: On what occasions do you mean? **Athenian**: Whenever any man has a brother or sister who is beautiful. So too in the case of a son or daughter, the same unwritten law [838b] is most effective in guarding men from sleeping with them, either openly or secretly, or wishing to have any connection with them – nay, most men never so much as feel any desire for such connection. **Megillus**:

risk to the health of the offspring unless in terms of frailty reflecting familial moral degeneracy, although according to some Socratics, incest between parent and child could result in the propagation of monsters and imbeciles, seemingly because of the age difference.<sup>21</sup> This same distinction persisted into the Middle

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That is true. **Athenian:** Is it not, then, by a brief sentence that all such pleasures are quenched? **Megillus:** What sentence do you mean? **Athenian:** The sentence that these acts are by no means holy, [838c] but hated of God and most shamefully shameful. And does not the reason lie in this, that nobody speaks of them otherwise, but every one of us, from the day of his birth, hears this opinion expressed always and everywhere, not only in comic speech, but often also in serious tragedy – as when there is brought on to the stage a Thyestes or an Oedipus, or a Macareus having secret intercourse with a sister, and all these are seen inflicting death upon themselves willingly as a punishment for their sins?). Translation based on that of Bury in *Plato in Twelve Volumes: With an English Translation*, ed. Harold N. Fowler, W. R. M. Lamb, Robert G. Bury, and Paul Shorey, vol. 11. Loeb Classical Library, 192 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1967).

**21** Such is the suggestion of Socrates in Xenophon's *Memorabilia*: "(22) καὶ ποίαν, ἔφη, δίκην, ὦ Σώκρατες, οὐ δύνανται διαφεύγειν γονεῖς τε παῖσι καὶ παῖδες γονεῦσι μιγνύμενοι; τὴν μεγίστην νῆ Δί', ἔφη: τί γὰρ ἂν μείζον πάθειεν ἄνθρωποι τεκνοποιοῦμενοι τοῦ κακῶς τεκνοποιεῖσθαι; (23) πῶς οὖν, ἔφη, κακῶς οὗτοι τεκνοποιοῦνται, οὓς γε οὐδὲν κωλύει ἀγαθοὺς αὐτοὺς ὄντας ἐξ ἀγαθῶν παιδοποιεῖσθαι; ὅτι νῆ Δί', ἔφη, οὐ μόνον ἀγαθοὺς δεῖ τοὺς ἐξ ἀλλήλων παιδοποιουμένους εἶναι, ἀλλὰ καὶ ἀκμαζόντας τοῖς σώμασιν. ἢ δοκεῖ σοι ὅμοια τὰ σπέρματα εἶναι τὰ τῶν ἀκμαζόντων τοῖς τῶν μήπω ἀκμαζόντων ἢ τῶν παρηκμακότων; ἀλλὰ μὰ Δί', ἔφη, οὐκ εἰκὸς ὅμοια εἶναι. πότῃ οὖν, ἔφη, βελτίω; δῆλον ὅτι, ἔφη, τὰ τῶν ἀκμαζόντων. τὰ τῶν μὴ ἀκμαζόντων ἄρα οὐ σπουδαῖα; οὐκ εἰκὸς μὰ Δί', ἔφη. οὐκοῦν οὕτω γε οὐ δεῖ παιδοποιεῖσθαι; οὐ γὰρ οὖν, ἔφη. οὐκοῦν οἱ γε οὕτω παιδοποιοῦμενοι ὥς οὐ δεῖ παιδοποιεῖν; εἰμοιγε δοκεῖ, ἔφη. τίνες οὖν ἄλλοι, ἔφη, κακῶς ἂν παιδοποιεῖντο, εἴ γε μὴ οὗτοι; ὁμογνωμονῶ σοι, ἔφη, καὶ τοῦτο" ([22] "And pray what sort of penalty is it, Socrates, that may not be avoided by parents and children who have intercourse with one another?" "The greatest, of course. For what greater penalty can men incur when they beget children than begetting them badly [i.e. producing imbecile or deformed children]?" [23] "How do they beget children badly then, if, as may well happen, the fathers are good men and the mothers good women?" "Surely because it is not enough that the two parents should be good. They must also be in full bodily vigour: unless you suppose that those who are in full vigour are no more efficient as parents than those who have not yet reached that condition or have passed it." "Of course, that is unlikely." "Then which are the better?" "Those who are in full vigour, clearly." "Consequently, those who are not in full vigour are not competent to become parents?" "It is improbable, of course." "In that case then, they ought not to have children?" "Certainly not." "Therefore, those who produce children in such circumstances produce them wrongly?" "I think so." "Who then will be bad fathers and mothers, if not they?" "I agree with you there too"). *Memorabilia* [Ἀπομνημονευμάτων], IV.iv.22–23, *Xenophontis opera omnia. T. 2 Commentarii, oeconomicvs, convivim apologia Socratis*, ed. Edgar Cardew Marchant. Scriptorum classicorum bibliotheca Oxoniensis (Oxford: Clarendon, 1921); translation from *Xenophon: In Seven Volumes*, ed. and trans. O(tis) J. Todd, and E(dgar) C. Marchant, vol. 4. Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press; London: Heinemann, 1923). Hugo Grotius expresses surprise at Socrates for condemning incestuous marriages on the ground only of disparity of age: "Mirari libet Socratis commentum apud Xenophontem qui in conjugii talibus nihil culpandem invenit praeter aetatis

Ages, and a comparison of Gerald's *Topographia* with his *Descriptio Kambriæ* shows that despite great overlap between the sins of the Irish and those of the Welsh, and in particular a propensity for incest, he makes no allegation of bestiality against the Cambrians, and correspondingly describes no horrific humanoid progeny.<sup>22</sup> Indeed, as Hole points out,<sup>23</sup> that was what made so unique the case of Francis Browne who brought forth a horribly disfigured live birth conceived in incest; although it also lent credence to the conviction that it must be divinely ordained, since there was no cognitive apparatus suggesting that such conduct typically, and hence naturally, produced a monstrous birth. Of course, this occurred not in the Middle Ages, but in England circa 1600. But it is illustrative of the type occurrence in which birth defects were thought to have a theological basis, rather than a natural cause which we might describe as "scientific" as in the case of human/animal hybrids resulting from bestial crossbreeding.

Bestiality was not the only natural manner of conceiving a hybrid, or perhaps it would be more accurate to say offspring that resembled a hybrid, although the alternative, namely maternal impression, could also result in other birth anomalies. The theory that the female of any species would reproduce in whole or part whatever impression was in her mind at the moment of conception, was held among the classical Greeks, and according to some Rabbis, among the ancient Hebrews as well, exemplified by Jacob's trick in the breeding of Laban's sheep detailed in Genesis 30.<sup>24</sup> The theory was so accepted as scientific fact by the Romans that Quintilian successfully defended an aristocratic wife against charges

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disparitatem" (The comment of Socrates, according to Xenophon, that he finds no culpability in such coitus other than disparity of age is certainly surprising). *De jure belli ac pacis*, Liber II. cap. v. ¶ xii, *Hugonis Grotii De Iure Belli Ac Pacis Libri Tres: In Quibus Jus Naturæ, Gentium, Item Juris Publici Præcipua Explicantur*, ed. Alexander Murray (Amsterdam: Willem Blaeu, 1632), 105. But Socrates is only attempting to set forth the physiological reason for the fact mentioned in 22. Xenophon, *Xenophon's Memorabilia of Socrates*, ed. Samuel Ross Winans (Boston, MA: J. Allyn, 1880), 258–59.

22 *Giraldi Cambrensis Descriptio Kambriæ*, Bk. II, cap. vi, in *Giraldi Cambrensis opera* (see note 14), 6: 213–14.

23 Robert Hole, "Incest, Consanguinity and a Monstrous Birth in Rural England, January 1600," *Social History* 25 (2000): 183–99.

24 According to the Rabbeinu Bahya, Bereshit 30:38: בני ישראל למדו חוב בני אדם שיש להם שכל ודעת לקדש עצמם בשעה שזנקין עם נשותיהם, שהרי אנו רואים בהמות ציור העובר יוצא כפי ציור המחשבה. וע"כ אמרו ז"ל לעולם יקדש אדם את עצמו בשעת תשמיש, וקדושה זו היא טהרת המחשבה שלא יחשוב באשה אחרת ולא בדברים אחרים רק באשתו. וזהו ק"ו שאין עליו תשובה, אם הבהמות שאין להם דעה להבין תועלת הדבר ונזקו ואין עושות אלא מכח הטבע יש להם כח לפעול בתולדות כפי הצורה המצטיירת בלבם והקבוע במחשבתם. ק"ו לבני אדם אשר להם כח גדול בנפש השכלית לצייר במחשבתם ובבלבם העליונים והחתונים ויש להם כונה בדעת ובשכל להתכין באותו הציור, שצריכים לטהר מחשבותם בענין ההוא (We must

of adultery when she gave birth to a child bearing a striking resemblance to the family's Ethiopian slave, contending that the anomaly resulted from her viewing at the time of conception merely a painting of such a figure that occupied a wall of the marital bedchamber, which story seems to have been accepted as credible by both Jerome and Augustine and was duly transmitted to later generations in their commentaries on Genesis.<sup>25</sup> Apparently, the Romans found this explanation

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all learn from the utilization Yaakov made of natural means of achieving certain desirable results, that when man and woman engage in marital relations, they too should imagine holy concepts in order for the children they hope to produce from their union to resemble the holy thoughts they entertained at that time. Our sages are on record [Shavuot 18] that at the time of marital intercourse a person should sanctify himself as a result of which he will have male children. What is the nature of this "sanctifying oneself?" He should have pure thoughts and most certainly fantasize about another woman at the time he sleeps with his wife [Nedarim 20]. This whole theory that imagination influences the quality and appearance of the child born if one has certain thoughts at the time one has marital relations is an incontrovertible theory. It is clear that if even animals which are not equipped with the brainpower and the ability to have holy thoughts influence the appearance of their offspring by such external stimuli as provided by Yaakov, then it is easily within the power of a human being to accomplish no less by concentrating on the right thoughts at such times.) Translation, Elyahu Munk, 1998, Sefaria: [https://www.sefaria.org/Rabbeinu\\_Bahya?lang=bi](https://www.sefaria.org/Rabbeinu_Bahya?lang=bi). (last accessed on Feb. 10, 2020).

25 The attribution of this defense in an adultery case to Quintilian seems to be that of Jerome in his discussion of Genesis 30:38 and Jacob's manipulation in the breeding herds of Laban's sheep: "Nec mirum hanc in conceptu feminarum esse naturam, ut quales perspexerint, sive mente conceperint in extremo voluptatis aestu, quae concipiunt, talem sobolem procreant: cum hoc ipsum etiam in equarum gregibus apud Hispanos dicatur fieri et Quintilianus in ea controversia, in qua accusabatur matrona quae Aethiopem pepererit, pro defensione illius argumentetur, hanc conceptuum esse naturam, quam supra diximus" (Nor is it surprising that there is in the nature of female conception, that what is seen or mentally seized upon at the moment of sexual climax, those things are imagined and similarly are produced in the progeny; which very thing is said to be utilized among the Spanish in herds of horses. And Quintilian, in a case in which a matron was accused of bearing a child by an Ethiopian, argued this defense that the conception was of this aforementioned nature). *Liber quaestionum hebraicarum in Genesim*, Cap. XXX (verses 32 et 35). Augustine had attributed this defense not to Quintilian but to Hippocrates: "In facto Iacob cum virgas excorticavit, detrahens viride, ut album varie appareret, et sic in conceptu fetus pecorum variarentur, cum matres in alveis aquarum biberent, et visis virgis illam varietatem conciperent; multa dicuntur similiter fieri in animalium fetibus; sed et mulieri accidisse traditur, et scriptum reperitur in libris antiquissimi et peritissimi medici Hippocratis, quod suspicione adulterii fuerat punienda, cum puerum pulcherrimum peperisset utrique parenti generique dissimilem, nisi memoratus medicus solvisset quaestionem, illis admonitis quaerere ne forte aliqua talis pictura esset in cubiculo; qua inventa mulier a suspicione liberata est" (In so doing, Jacob, when he took the bark off of the branches, tearing out the green to make them look white, such that at the moment of conception, when the mothers would drink in the water of the canals, they also would look at the branches in this variety of colors, the flocks of the herds likewise became spotted. Many



more plausible, intelligible, or perhaps palatable, than the more sophisticated atavistic theory for this very phenomenon propounded by Aristotle which some commentators have argued has a kinship to modern distinctions between genome and phenome, although leaving unanswered issues with regard to particularly distant transmission.<sup>26</sup> In fact, maternal impression was to be employed in legal proceedings well into the *Frühneuzeit*, it sometimes being argued that particular conceptions were solely through the force of imagination without male intervention, thus explaining how wives could bear their husbands' children during the spouse's

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similar things are said to occur in animal breeding. So also it is handed down and found in books of the greatest antiquity concerning a certain woman and the most learned physician, Hippocrates. The woman was about to be punished on suspicion of adultery, having brought into the world a child of rare beauty, who had no resemblance either to its father or mother or to its family. But the said physician admonished them to see if there was not some similar picture in the bedroom. When that was found, the woman was relieved of suspicion). *Questionum In Heptateuchum Libri Septem* I: 93 (30, 37, 42). Unfortunately, this narrative does not appear in either the pseudo-Quintilian *Disputationes majorem*, nor in the possibly genuine *Disputationes minorem*. A tale of the "Natus Aethiopem" does appear in Calpurnius Flaccus, *Disputationes* 2, detailing the accusation and defense of a married woman accused of adultery because her baby appeared black. However, the details of the defense do not appear identical to those ascribed to Quintilian, and although some scholars have apparently advanced the possibility that Jerome had confused details from the two rhetoricians, the case for such conflation appears weak. See, e.g., Catherine Schneider, "Lactance, Jérôme et les recueils de déclamations pseudo-quintiliens," *Autour de Lactance: Hommages à Pierre Monat*, ed. Jean-Yves Guillaumin and Stéphane Ratti (Besançon: Presses Universitaires de Franche-Comté, 2003), 57–70. It is not my purpose here to resolve the conflicting theories regarding the origin of this story, but rather to demonstrate the wide acceptance of theories of maternal impression throughout the ancient world. See also the discussion in Damiano Fermi "Questione Di Sguardi. Il Caso Di 'Impressione Materna' in Heliod. 4, 8, 5 E 10, 14, 7," *Quaderni Urbinati Di Cultura Classica*, Nuova Serie, 106.1 (2014): 165–79. The theory of maternal impression seems integral to an understanding of Genesis 30:38, and a similar story appears in the classical midrash, Genesis Rabbah (VaYetzei 73:10): מעשה בכּוּשִׁי אֶחָד שֶׁנִּשְׂא לְכוּשִׁית אֶחָת וְהוּלִיד מִמֶּנָּה בֶּן לָבָן, תֶּפֶס הָאֵב לָבָן וְבָא לוֹ אֶצֶל ר' אֲלִי שֶׁמָּא אִינוּ בְּנֵי אֲלִי הִיא לָךְ מֵרְאוּת בְּתוּךְ בֵּיתְךָ אֲלִי הֵן אֲלִי שְׁחוּרָה אוֹ לְבָנָה לָבָן (It happened once that a colored man married a colored woman and she had a white child. The father took the child to Rabbi [= Yehudah Ha-Nasi] and said: "Maybe this isn't my son?" [Rabbi] responded: "Do you have portraits in your house?" He said: "Yes." [Rabbi] asked: "Of black or white [people]?" He said: "White." [Rabbi] concluded: "This is why you have a white son"). Zev Farber, "Maternal Impressions: From Sheep to Humans," *TheTorah.com* (2013). <https://thetorah.com/article/maternal-impressions-from-sheep-to-humans> (last accessed on Feb. 20, 2020).

**26** See Aristotle, *De generatione animalium*, note 19 above, I.18. For a discussion of the various modern readings of Aristotle regarding heredity, see Devin Henry, "Aristotle on the Mechanism of Inheritance," *Journal of the History of Biology* 39 (2006): 425–55.

prolonged absence.<sup>27</sup> Surely, it was on the basis of this impression theory that Pliny could repeat as believable the story that a woman had given birth to an elephant,<sup>28</sup> and certainly not upon any presumption of physically impossible coitus.

This theory of maternal impression had an additional wrinkle, depending on whether one held to prototypical epigenetic theories of embryology as did Aristotle,<sup>29</sup> and hence Albertus Magnus and perhaps Thomas Aquinas as well, or to preformationist theories, which seemed to characterize Galen. For an epigeneticist was more likely to find that traumatic events or impressions *during* pregnancy could affect fetal development, and not merely impressions at the time of conception. Hence, one could bring forth offspring with hybrid characteristics if one had been moved by a strong impression of some animal at conception or if during pregnancy, the expectant mother was traumatized by such a beast.

Suffice it to say that the classical legacy provided medieval people with a virtual smorgasbord of natural theories and explanations for monsters and their generation. For the most part, there is little evidence that a significant percentage of even the most learned among them devoted considerable effort to sorting out the differences between Aristotle, Pliny, Galen, Augustine, or other classical authors on the specific issue of teratogenesis. However, during the thirteenth century, with increased availability to the Aristotelian corpus as well as the commentaries of Islamic scholars such as Avicenna, there were a handful of Western intellectuals who expended considerable effort in analyzing and distinguishing classical theoreticians. Perhaps none of these was more devoted to the empirical sciences than Albertus Magnus, noted for once writing:

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<sup>27</sup> For an interesting example, see Thomas Bartholin, *Thomae Bartholini Historiarum anatomicarum [et] medicarum rariorum centuria V. [et] VI. Accessit Joannis Rhodii Mantissa anatomica*, ed. Peter Haubold (Copenhagen: Henrich Gödian, 1661), Hist. Cent. LXI, 296–304.

<sup>28</sup> Or at least he does not scoff at such tales: “Pompeius Magnus in ornamentis theatri mirabiles fama posuit effigies, ob id diligentius magnorum artificum ingeniis elaboratas, inter quas legitur Eutythis a XX liberis rogo inlata Trallibus, enixa XXX partus, Alcippe elephantum. quamquam id inter ostenta est. namque et serpentem peperit inter initia Marsici belli ancilla, et multiformes pluribus modis inter monstra partus eduntur” (Pompeius Magnus, among the decorations of his theatre, erected certain statues of remarkable persons, which had been executed with the greatest care by artists of the very highest reputation, wherein it is read that Eutythis, of Tralles, was borne to the funeral pile by twenty of her children, having had thirty in all; that Alcippe was delivered of an elephant though that must be looked upon as a prodigy; so, too, where, at the commencement of the Marsian war, a female slave was delivered of a serpent.), *Naturalis historia* 7,3 [34].

<sup>29</sup> On the ahistorical but philosophically justifiable nature of such argument, see Ina Goy, “Was Aristotle the ‘Father’ of the Epigenesis Doctrine?” *History and Philosophy of the Life Sciences* 40 (2018): 1–16. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40656-018-0193-2> (last accessed on Feb. 10, 2020).

Unde sciendum, quod Augustino in his quae sunt de fide et moribus plusquam Philosophis credendum est, si dissentiunt. Sed si de medicina loqueretur, plus ego crederem Galeno, vel Hipocrati: et si de naturis rerum loquatur, credo Aristoteli plus vel alii experto in rerum naturis.<sup>30</sup>

[Whence in science, in matters of faith and morals Augustine is more to be believed than the Philosophers should they differ. But when speaking of medicine, I believe Galen or Hippocrates more; and if speaking of natural things, I believe Aristotle more than any other expert in natural science.]

Not surprisingly, therefore, Albertus largely adopted the views of Aristotle on the generation of animals, and like Aristotle, recognized that species not too dissimilar sometimes interbreed to create assorted hybrids.<sup>31</sup> He also granted that sometimes humans bring forth offspring who are deformed to the point of

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**30** *Super IV libros Sententiarum*, in *B. Alberti Magni Ratisbonensis Episcopi, Ordinis Prædicatorum, Opera Omnia: Ex Editione Lugdunensi Religiose Castigata*, ed. Auguste Borgnet, Emile Borgnet, Jacques Quétif, and Jacques Echard, vols. 24–25 (Paris: Louis Vivès, 1890–1895), Lib.II, dist. 13, art. 2, p. 247.

**31** “Animalia autem convenientia in specie et genere naturaliter per coitum miscentur ad invicem: et praeterea illa quorum natura est vicina quamvis non sint eadem specie omnino, et praecipue illa quorum non magna est diversitas in figura et quantitate, et conveniunt in quantitate temporis quod mensurat impraegnationem. Omnia enim huiusmodi convenientias facientia sunt in animalibus quibusdam diversis quidem specie, sed propinquis secundum naturam ad invicem, sicut vulpes et canes et lupi propinquas habent naturas. Visum est etiam hoc aliquando in simia coeunte cum cane: sicut etiam hoc in avibus videtur quod cubeg coit cum gallina. Est etiam opinio quorundam quod accipitres diversarum figurarum et specierum, coeant ad invicem et generent ex se invicem. Accidisse etiam fertur hoc in animali quod Graece vocatur raniez. Quidam etiam opinantur quod canes Indiae venatici alti qui leporariis sunt similes, generentur ex canibus feminis et tygridibus sicut iam dudum diximus” (Moreover, animals assembled in species and genera naturally through coitus mix reciprocally; and subsequently their nature is similar although they be not altogether the species in the same way, and particularly, their diversity is not great in figure and extent, and they harmonize in their period of gestation. Indeed, all such modes of interbreeding are in animals of diverse species, but similar according with nature mutually, just as foxes and dogs and wolves have similar natures. Likewise, it appears that sometimes for this purpose a simian comes together with a dog, just as among birds, it appears that a partridge has intercourse with a hen. Moreover, it is the conjecture of some that birds of prey of diverse figure and species mutually come together and breed among themselves. Indeed, it so happened that what is called “raniez” in Greek was bred in animals. Some even opine that the big hunting dogs of India which are similar to leopards were bred from femals dogs and tigers, just as we have said already). *Albertus Magnus, De Animalibus Libri Xxvi, Nach Der Cölner Urschrift: Mit Unterstützung der Kgl. Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften zu München, Der Görres-Gesellschaft und der Rheinischen Gesellschaft für Wissenschaftliche Forschung*, ed. Hermann Stadler (Münster i. W: Aschendorff, 1916), Cap. VIII: Quae animalia ex coitu suo impraegnantur et quae non, et de causis sterilitatis, sec. 130, p. 1133.

looking much like a cross between two animals, or sometimes even three or more.<sup>32</sup> However, he was of the opinion that this is not due to bestial coitus, particularly because humans and dogs, or horses, or bulls, for example, are too dissimilar to breed; but rather such deformity has the same cause as too many or too few members, or other sorts of natal anomalies:

Nos autem opinamur quod ex coitu valde dissimilium animalium non potest esse tale quale dicunt monstrum, eo quod unum spermatum corrumpere aliud: sed ex coitu similium fit generatio de qua iam in praecedentibus locuti sumus. Signum autem quod talis generatio non fiat, est diversitas temporis impraegnationis talium animalium in quo multum diversificantur. Homo enim et canis et taurus valde diversa suae impraegnationis habent tempora: et tamen videmus quosdam partus monstruosos esse secundum participationem membrorum permixtam dictorum animalium. Quoddam etiam <est> monstrum propter suorum ex specie debitorum multitudinem membrorum in forma diversorum et figura sicut quod generatur multorum pedum aut multorum capitum. Et causae horum monstrorum propinquae sunt ad invicem et consimiles. Monstruosa enim et habentia membra occasionata, causas physicas propinquas habent: monstrum enim est aliquam occasionem passum.<sup>33</sup>

[We are of the opinion, however, that from coitus of two very dissimilar animals, it is not possible to engender such type monsters as they describe, as one sperm would annihilate the other; but from intercourse of two similar species, it is possible to generate offspring as we have previously discussed. The indicator of whether such generation is possible is the term of pregnancy of such animals in which there is much variation. Indeed, men and

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32 “Ex virtute enim in oppositum agente, partus hominis forte habebit caput arietis aut tauri, sicut dicitur de Minotauro in fabulis poetarum: idem autem iudicium est de similibus. Tales autem occasiones magis accidunt aliis animalibus quam hominibus. Aliquando enim generatus est vitulus caput habens hominis, et agnus caudam habens tauri. Aliquando etiam fit huiusmodi generatio ex partibus quibusdam non occasionatis in corpore, ita quod tota pars est membrum perfectum explens actum membri et in nulla sui parte corruptum vel vitiatum. Quidam autem physicorum omnes istas similitudines monstruosas attribuunt figuris quae videntur in duabus vel tribus speciebus animalium, quae in monstris videntur permixtae, referentes esse haec ex coitus spermatibus permixtis duorum aut trium animalium diversarum specierum existentium” (Indeed, by capacity acting in opposition, the parts of a man perhaps could have the head of a ram or a bull, just as is said of the Minotaur in the stories of poets: nonetheless, there is considered opinion regarding resemblances. Moreover, such occasions more frequently happen among other animals than men. Sometimes, there a calf is born having the head of a man, and a lamb having the tail of a bull. Sometimes, there is even this type of birth from parts not occurring in the body, such that every part is a perfect member fulfilling the capacity of the member and in none of its parts mutilated or devoid of strength. Moreover, all these physical monstrosities are those similarities attributable to forms seen in two or three species of animal, which seem to be comingled in monsters, suggesting the mixing of sperm of two or three animals of diverse existing species through coitus). *De animalibus*, preceding note, Lib.XVIII, tract. 1, cap. 6, p. 1215

33 Ibid.

dogs and bulls have vastly different terms of gestation; and yet we see instances in which the parts of monstrous births appear to be a mix of the two animals; which is indeed a monster on account of its departure in appearance of form and figure, just as in cases of extra appendages or multiple heads. And the proximate causes of such monstrosity are reciprocal and identical. For just as the strange occurrences of extra members have natural causes, so too the occurrence of a monster on some occasion.]

This is obviously the position of Aristotle, and arguably suffers from the same ambiguity concerning the adjective *valde*. Exactly how dissimilar is **too** dissimilar? Albert obviously would have discounted the stories of Gerald concerning hybrids in Ireland, but what about Damian's suspicions regarding Maimo? Albert mentions in various locations throughout his treatise the greater similarity between humans and simians than that between humans and dogs or cattle. And as will be discussed shortly, this question of degree of dissimilarity as a bar to hybridization will be revisited in the *Frühneuzeit*. Thus, while Albert would have been skeptical of any purported humanoid hybrid, attributing such superficial resemblances simply to monstrous birth defects, it cannot be said with certainty that he would have considered such hybridization an impossibility in all cases.

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So once again, theory aside, did ancient or medieval people actually witness monsters in the sense of hybrids, separate and apart from what Augustine would identify as humans with monstrous defects? I think, in one sense the answer is probably yes. Peter Damian, for example, never specifically says that he saw Maimo; but had he, I do not doubt he would have seen a hybrid human-ape, because his cognitive imagination would have predisposed him to seeing exactly that, and I am equally confident he believed observations of the creature in question had been accurately relayed to Pope Alexander II. Similarly, Gerald having manifestly read Pliny voraciously, would hardly have been surprised that Irish beastly couplings could result in half human, half animal creatures. And almost any churchman, having read Genesis in light of the commentaries by Jerome and Augustine, could believe that even were animal-human hybrids not the result of sexual intercourse, they could be products of maternal impression.

But before taking this as some sort of medieval gullibility, let us consider the investigations and theories ushered in by the Scientific Revolution. In this endeavor, of course, we are somewhat frustrated by the fact that the old genre of marvel literature continued and overlapped with the more supposedly scientific publications, and that the printing press made it all too easy to feed the

appetite of the public for the former, into which like Park and Daston<sup>34</sup> I am willing to place such publications as *Des Monstres et prodiges* (1573), by Ambroise Paré.<sup>35</sup> This phenomenon is compounded by the fact that the upper echelons of the literate public – indeed, members of the very intelligentsia such as Jean Bodin – being familiar with the writings of the ancients, were already predisposed to believe not only in humanoid monsters, but that they were in many cases generated by bestial coitus.<sup>36</sup>

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**34** Katharine Park and Lorraine J. Daston, “Unnatural Conceptions: The Study of Monsters in Sixteenth- and Seventeenth-Century France and England,” *Past & Present* 92 (1981): 20–54; here 36.

**35** Actually first published as the second part of *Deux livres de chirurgie, de la génération de l'homme, & manière d'extraire les enfans hors du ventre de la mère, ensemble ce qu'il faut faire pour la faire mieux, & plus tost accoucher, avec la cure de plusieurs maladies qui luy peuvent survenir* (Paris: André Wechel, 1573), under the title *Des monstres tant terrestres que marins, avec leurs portraits. Plus un petit traité des plaies faites aux parties nerveuses*, a reproduction of which can be accessed at: <http://catalogue.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/cb37251763s> (last accessed on Feb. 10, 2020). The more definitive edition is generally considered that included in *Les Oeuvres d'Ambroise Paré ... divisées en vingt huit livres avec les figures et portraits, tant de l'anatomie que des instruments de chirurgie, et de plusieurs monstres, reveuës et augmentées par l'auteur*. Quatriesme Edition (Paris, Gabriel Buon, 1585), which can be accessed at: [https://archive.org/details/BIUSante\\_01709/page/n24](https://archive.org/details/BIUSante_01709/page/n24) (last accessed on Feb. 10, 2020).

**36** See, e.g., his *Methodus ad facilem historianum cognitionem*, wherein he writes: “... cum enim difficillimè se continere possint, tum verò in libidinem projecti execrandis voluptatibus abutuntur. Ab illis enim promiscuè belluarum & hominum concubitus, unde tot monstra nobis pariant Africae regiones” ( ... however, when they are able to contain themselves with great difficulty, then indeed they abound in abject desire for detestable passions; for from these arise the promiscuous intercourse of beasts and humans, whence so many monsters appear to us in the regions of Africa). *I. Bodini Methodus ad facilem historianum cognitionem* (Amsterdam: Johann Ravestein, 1650), 102. It has been argued, with some justification, that such views contributed to some racist constructs. See, e.g., Winthrop D. Jordan, “First Impressions,” *Theories of Race and Racism – a Reader*, ed. Les Back and John Solomos (London: Routledge, 2000), 33–50; here 42–44. In all fairness to Bodin, however, he was merely speaking from the standpoint of widely accepted views of the Galenic humours and complexions, and their relationship to temperate versus tropical climes, and combining this medical perspective with the marvels reported by the ancients and by some medieval travellers concerning the wondrous monsters of sub-Saharan Africa. In some respects, this is less directly racist than are equivalent writings pertaining to intercourse with Jews antisemitic, comparing such coitus to bestiality with dogs and similarly likely to bring forth some sort of humanoid monstrosity: “Nec est distinguendam an pueri nascentur ex coitu tali necne, se an christianus habeat rem cum iudea que canis reputatur & propter commixtionem nature, & quia potest coitu tali concipi & generari qui christianus non fiet quamvis videatur quod procedat, quia rem habere cum iudea est rem habere cum muliere a deo create, non animali bruto” (It is not to be distinguished whether or not children are so born, whether the Christian is reckoned to have had relations with a jew or with a dog, because of the confusion of natures, and because it is possible that the thing so conceived and born, which a Christian should not do, however much what

The real focus for our purposes should not be on such popular survival of ancient and medieval belief in monsters, but upon the evolving empiricism that authors such as Le Goff would deem characteristic of “modernity.” Surely this would include the Royal Academy which pursued a Baconian program,<sup>37</sup> and the Académie des Sciences which pursued a more medically oriented agenda,<sup>38</sup>

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proceeds, since the thing had with the jew is a thing had with the mother, appears created by God not a brute animal). Jean Le Coq, *Questiones per arresta decise et alia opera*, in *Stilus supreme curie parlamenti parisiensis*, ed. Étienne Aufreri (Paris: Gallio Prateni, 1542), Questio clxii, folio clxxxiii. This *Questio* appears as q. 403 in Jean Le Coq, *Questiones Johannis Galli*, ed. Marguerite Boulet-Sautel (Paris: E. de Boccard, 1945), 482, and is discussed in Esther Cohen, *The Crossroads of Justice: Law and Culture in Late Medieval France*. Brill’s Studies in Intellectual History, 36 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1993), 89, where she points out that this provision continued to be printed as precedent in various Italian and German law books well into the seventeenth century. For our purposes, it suffices that these passages reflect a belief in sexual propagation of hybrids; the extent to which that belief either engendered prejudices or merely justified preexisting prejudices is a topic for a different paper.

**37** In particular, with regard to monstrosities he advocated rigorous collection: “Facienda enim est congeries sive historia naturalis particularis omnium monstrorum et partuum naturae prodigiorum; omnis denique novitatis et raritatis et inconsueti in natura. Hoc vero faciendum est cum severissimo delectu, ut constet fides. Maxime autem habenda sunt pro suspectis quae pendent quomodocunque a religione, ut prodigia Livii: nec minus, quae inveniuntur in scriptoribus magiae naturalis, aut etiam alchymiae, et hujusmodi hominibus; qui tanquam proci sunt et amatores fabularum. Sed depromenda sunt illa ex gravi et fida historia, et auditionibus certis” (For we have to make a collection or particular natural history of all prodigies and monstrous births of nature; of everything in short that is in nature new, rare, and unusual. This must be done, however, with the strictest scrutiny, that fidelity may be ensured. Now those things are to be chiefly suspected which depend in any way on religion, as the prodigies of Livy, and those not less which are found in writers on natural magic or alchemy, and men of that sort, who are a kind of suitors and lovers of fables. But whatever is admitted must be drawn from grave and credible history and trustworthy reports). Francis Bacon, *Franc. Baconis De Verulamio, Summi Angliæ Cancellarij, Novum Organum Scientiarum* (1620; Leiden: Adriaen Wijngaerden, and Franciscus Moyaerd, 1645), Book II, Aphorism XXIX; translation based upon that found in Francis Bacon, *The Works of Francis Bacon*, ed. and trans. James Spedding, Robert L. Ellis, Douglas D. Heath, and William Rawley, 15 vols. (Boston: Taggard & Thompson, 1861), vol. 8: 237–38.

**38** Such is the assertion of Park and Daston, “Unnatural Conceptions” (see note 34). By the time of Diderot’s *Encyclopédie*, arguably there was little or no difference between the English and French approaches. Diderot essentially paraphrases Bacon when he writes: “Il est inutile de s’étendre sur les avantages de l’histoire de la nature uniforme. Mais si l’on nous demande à quoi peut servir l’histoire de la nature monstrueuse, nous répondrons à passer des prodiges de ses écarts aux merveilles de l’art; à l’égarer encore ou à la remettre dans son chemin; & surtout à corriger la témérité des propositions générales, ut axiomatum corrigatur iniquitas.” (It serves no purpose to expand upon the benefits of the history of uniform nature. But if one were to inquire of us what purpose the history of monstrous nature serves, we respond, to pass from prodigies of deviancy to wonders of art, to depart again or remain on course; and most of all,

but also a number of other naturalists on the continent deserving of consideration. Leaving aside the difficult question of Aldrovani and his *Monstrorum historia*,<sup>39</sup> one should not omit Fortunio Liceti and his *De monstrorum caussis, natura et differentiis*,<sup>40</sup> who despite his secular scientific approach, believed that hybrids could be generated through bestial couplings,<sup>41</sup> in which assessment he

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to amend the temerity of general propositions, that axiomatic excessiveness be corrected.) “Système des connaissances humaines,” *Encyclopédie, ou Dictionnaire raisonné des sciences des arts et des métiers*, ed. Denis Diderot & Jean le Rond d’Alembert, 28 vols. (Paris: Chez Briasson, David, Le Breton, Durand, 1751–1772), 1: XLVII; quoted and discussed in Andrew Curran and Patrick Graille, “The Faces of Eighteenth-Century Monstrosity,” *Eighteenth-Century Life* 21 (1997): 1–12.

**39** *Monstrorum historia cum paralipomenis historiae omnium animalium. Bartholomaeus Ambrosinus ... volumen composuit. Marcus Antonius Bernia in lucem edidit. Cum indice copiosissimo* (Bologna: Nicoló Tebaldini, 1642), which can be accessed at: [https://mediatheques.montpellier3m.fr/MEMONUM/DOC/IFD/TEXTE\\_IMPRIME\\_00249\\_10RES](https://mediatheques.montpellier3m.fr/MEMONUM/DOC/IFD/TEXTE_IMPRIME_00249_10RES) (last accessed on Feb. 10, 2020).

**40** Fortunio Liceti, *De monstrorum caussis, natura, et differentiis libri duo: in quibus ex rei natura monstrorum historiae, caussae, generationes, & differentiae plurimae a sapientibus intactae: cum generatim & in plantarum, & belluarum genere, tum seorsum in humana specie tractantur: multis illustrium autorum locis difficillimis explanatis de masculo parturiente, de feminis in viros mutatis, de hermaphroditorum natura, de dissimilium specierum: venere prolifica, de castratorum fecunditate, depuero lapidescente, de anomantis aurea parte, alijsque admirabilibus*, ed. Paolo Frambotto, and Varisco Varisco (Padua: Paulo Frambotto, 1634), accessible at: <https://archive.org/details/demonstrorumcaus00lice> (last accessed on Feb. 10, 2020).

**41** See, for example, his inclusion of the following report: “Romae puella innupta filium semicanem peperit qui ab umbilico sursum versus humanam, inde vero deorsum canis exquisitam haberet effigiam: id monstrum memorant Volaterranus, Cardanus Paraeus et alii plures: Scriptum Volaterranus in Commentariis Urbanis reliquit, sub Pio hujus nominis III. Pont. Maximo, in Hetruria puellam quamdam, quod cum cane adamato stupri consuetudinem habuisset, gravidam esse factam ac semicanem faetum edidisse, hoc est pedibus manibus ac auribus caninis, cetera vero hominem; remque expiationis gratia ad Pontificem fuisse delatam. Memoriae proditum est, relatu Magii suis in Miscellaneis, Avenione, anno salutis humanae MDXLIII, ex simili concubitu editum esse monstrum, humano quidem capite praeditum, sed auriculis, collo, brachiis, manibus veretro, partibusque aliis quibusdam caninis; puerperam vero fassam esse se a cane initam; ideoque mox prid. Calend. Aug. jussu Francisci Gallorum Regis una cum cane amasio vindicibus flammis facinus expiasse” (At Rome, an unmarried girl gave birth to a son who was half dog, which was human from the navel up, but from there down, like a dog. This unnatural event is recorded by Volaterranus, Cardan, Paré and several others. Volaterranus writes in his *Commentariorum urbanorum* that under the reign of Pope Pius III in Tuscany a certain girl, because she had been accustomed to lie with a dog, became pregnant and gave birth to a child who was half dog, that is, it had the fore- and hind-paws of a dog, as well as the ears, but was otherwise like a human; the issue of how the girl should atone for this sin was referred to the pope. Relative hereto it is further brought forth by Magius in his *Miscellanies* that at Avignon, in 1543, after intercourse of like nature, a woman gave



agreed with Paré;<sup>42</sup> or Jacobus Bontius, Dutch physician and pioneer of tropical medicine, who in his *Historiae naturalis et medicae Indiae orientalis*, not only introduced the West to the Ourang Outang (i.e., orangutan, which word translates from Malay as “person of the forest or jungle”), but asserted as well that he had witnessed the hybrid offspring of native women and these beasts that frequently slipped into huts at night to copulate with the locals.<sup>43</sup> Indeed, this belief in

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birth to a monster, having the head of a human being, but the ears, neck, forelimbs, paws, sexual organs, and other parts of a dog. The woman confessed that she in fact had been impregnated by the dog. And so, soon after the first of August, in expiation of her sins, by order of Francis, King of the French, she was consigned to the flames along with her canine lover). Liceti, *De monstrorum caussis*, preceding note, 165–66.

42 *Deux livres de chirurgie*, 473–74; *Les Oeuvres d'Ambroise Paré*, p. MXLVII (see note 35), where Paré provides a version of the same birth related by Liceti in note 41. His position on this question of producing human-animal hybrids through bestiality is made clear at the outset of his chapter on terrestrial monsters: “Il y a des monstres qui naissent moitié de figures de bestes, & l'autre humaine, ou du tout retenans des animaux, qui sont produits des Sodomistes, & Atheistes, qui se ioignent & débordent contre nature avec les bestes, & de là s'engenderent plusieurs monstres hideux, & grandement honteux à voir, & à en parler: toutefois les deshonesteté gist en effect, & non en paroles, & est lors que cela se fait une chose fort malheureuse & abominable, & grand horreur à l'homme, ou à la femme se mester, & accoupler avec les bestes brutes: & partant aucuns naissent demi hommes & demi bestes.” *Deux livres de chirurgie*, 472; *Les Oeuvres d'Ambroise Paré*, p. MXLVII.

43 “Plinius, ille Natura Genius, lib. 7 cap. 2, de Satyris dixit: Sunt & Satyri, subsolanis in Indiis locis & montibus perniciosissimum animal; tum quadrupedes, tum & recte currentes humana specie & effigie, propter velocitatem non nisi senes aut aegri capiuntur. Ast quod majorem meretur admirationem, vidi ego aliquot utrusque sexus erecte incedentes, imprimis eam (cujus effigiem hic exhibeo) Satyram foemellam tanta, verecundia ab ignotis sibi hominibus occultentem, tum quoque faciem manibus (liceat ita dicere) tegentem, ubertimque lacrymantem, gemitus cientem, et cæteros humanos actus exprimentem, ut nihil ei humani deesse diceres praeter loquelam. Loqui vero eos easque posse, lavani aiunt, sed non velle, ne ad labores cogerentur: ridicule me hercules. Nomen ei indunt Ourang Outang, quod hominem silvae significat, eosque nasci affirmant e libidine mulierum Indarum quæ se Simiis & Cercopithecis detestanda libidine miscent” (Of satyrs, Pliny, that patron regarding nature, writes in book 7, chapter 2, that Satyrs are a destructive animal existing in the eastern mountains of India, at one time moving quickly on all fours, at the next upright and with human appearance and form; on account of their swiftness; they are caught only when old or sick. But what warrants greater wonder is that I saw some myself, both male and female, walking erect. In particular there was the female satyr (a figure of whom is here displayed), who out of modesty concealed herself from strangers, hid her face in her hands (it is permissible to so say) and copiously wept, sighing all the while, and performed other actions of a human being, so that nothing human was lacking except speech. Indeed, the Javans say they can speak, but do not, for fear they will be put to work: laughably, by Hercules! The name they give these creatures is Ourang Outang, meaning man of the woods. And these, they insist, are born out of the wantonous of the native women who,

sexual generation of hybrids persisted throughout the seventeenth century not only among naturalists and doctors, but consequently among practitioners of the legal profession as well, culminating in trials and executions for bestiality based largely upon the physical evidence of hybrid children, as witness the young woman, supposedly publicly burned in Copenhagen in 1643, having been delivered of a cat-headed child.<sup>44</sup> This was the year after one of the first executions in

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with detestable lasciviousness, mix themselves with apes and monkeys). *Jacobi Bontii historiae naturalis & medicae Liber quintus, De quadripedibus, avibus & piscibus*, in Willem Piso, *Gulielmi Pisonis De Indiæ utriusque re naturali et medica libri quatuordecim: quorum contenta pagina sequens exhibet* (Amsterdam: Louis and Daniel Elzevir, 1658).

**44** I say “supposedly,” for the relation of this entire incident demonstrates how observations, recollections and historical references become conflated even in the modern era. J. Edgar Morison reported the incident in his article “One Entrance into Life,” *The Ulster Medical Journal* 44 (1975): 1–14; here 4, thus: “The learned anatomist Bartholin recorded objectively and without disapproval how in 1683 an unfortunate girl who gave birth to a child with a ‘cat’s head’ was burned in the public square of Copenhagen.” DeSesso subsequently corrected Morison as follows: “Morison and several other authors incorrectly report the date of the execution as 1683. The execution occurred in 1638. Thomas Bartholin died in 1680.” John M. DeSesso, “The Arrogance of Teratology: A Brief Chronology of Attitudes Throughout History,” *Birth Defects Research* 111 (2019): 123–41; <https://doi.org/10.1002/bdr2.1422> (last accessed on Feb. 10, 2020); here, 5.1, p. 4, note 1. DeSesso seems to have presumed that Morison simply inverted the numbers of the date; but in fact, Morison appears to have taken this statement directly from Josef Warkany, “Congenital Malformations in the Past,” *Journal of Chronic Diseases* 10 (1959): 84–96; here 89, where Warkany provides an almost verbatim translation of Ernest Martin, *Histoire des monstres depuis l’antiquité jusqu’à nos jours* (Paris: C. Reinwald, 1880), 80: “On trouve, dans les écrits de Bartholin, qu’une fille, ayant mis au monde un monstre à tête de chat (*katzenkopf*), fut brûlée toute vive, sur la place publique de Copenhague, *ob lascivorem cum fele jocum*. Ce fait se passait en l’an 1683: le grande anatomiste, en le recountant, ne parait pas s’en émouvoir, bien que, mieux qu’un autre, il eût pu rechercher si un tel crime est possible, et s’il n’existait pas uniquement dans l’imagination des juges.” Martin’s passage was also included in large part in Henry F. Lewis, “Iniencephalus,” *The American Journal of Obstetrics and Diseases of Women and Children* 36 (1897): 11–53; here 52; as well as Armand de Quatrefages, *Téatologie et téatogénie* (Paris: Impr. Nationale, 1887), 2. The passage continues to be quoted around the world. Cf. Martin Riedel, “Vrozené srdeční vady v historii I. Nebiologické teorie,” *Kardiologická revue* 4 (2004): 122–28; here 125. However, a review of Bartholin’s works indicates only the entry: “Lugduni Bat. 1638, femina vulgaris condicionis proper templum D. Petri enixa est foetum capite felino, caetera elegantem. Monstri occasionem imaginatio dederat, praegnans enim felem in lecto suo cum horrore viderat” (At Leiden in 1638, a woman of common state near St. Peter’s Church gave birth to a child that had the head of a cat, but that was otherwise normal. Imagination provided the opportunity for a monster, when being pregnant she saw with horror a cat in her bed). *Thomae Bartholini historiarum anatomicarum rariorum centuria I et II* (Hafniae [Copenhagen]: Hauboldt, 1654), 241–42. There is the possibility that Martin conflated Bartholin’s observation with that of Dr. Solomon Reisell, reported by the Kaiserlich Leopoldinisch-Carolinische Deutsche Akademie der Naturforscher in the annual *Miscellanea Curiosa, sive Ephemeridum Medico-Physicarum Germanicarum Academiae Naturae Curiosorum sive Acta*

New England, being George Spencer of the New Haven colony, an ill-reputed farmer with but one good eye, whose sow brought forth a stillborn piglet with but one eye in the middle of its forehead. Pressed concerning what neighbors considered a strange coincidence, Spencer apparently admitted to having engaged in intercourse with the animal but retracted his confession before trial. Two witnesses being required for conviction, he was found guilty based first on the retracted confession and second on the family resemblance, as it were, and was duly hanged.<sup>45</sup> A similar case arose in the colony three years later, but

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*Ephemeridum naturae curiosorum. Academiae Caesareo-Leopoldinae Naturae Curiosorum Ephemerides* (Nuremberg: Wolfgang Mauritius Endter, 1683): “Addendum denique est Exemplum periculosae imaginationis & terrores in gravidis, quod relatum est Antverpiâ 17. Septembr. 1682, in Novellis. Mulierem scilicet nobilis familiae gravidæ ex felis circa collum applicatione terricam peperisse foetum monstrosum, cujus caput & humeri quoad cutem, pilos & barbam felinis similes fuerint, reliquæ partes humane” (A final addendum is an example of the danger of imagination and terrors during pregnancy, which was related in the Antwerp news of 17 September 1682. Apparently a pregnant woman of a noble family terrified by cats lying about her neck, delivered a monstrous foetus, whose head and humerus with regard to the skin, hair and beard were like a cat’s, the remaining parts human.) Observation CXV, p. 274. However, neither of these observations of cat-headed offspring, probably anencephalic, recount a public execution. The other possibility is that Martin had in mind the 1683 *Danske Lov*, which prescribed hanging after which the body should be burned for those engaged in parent-child incest (“... da skulle Kroppene naar de halshugne ere, kastis paa een Ild og opraendis.” Art. 6-13-14); burning alive for sodomy, which would have included bestiality: “Omgaengelse, som er imod Naturen, straffis med Baal og Brand.” Art. 6-13-15. Of course, regional law codes would have authorized the burning for bestiality, but to date, no record of prosecution has emerged pertaining to either case; though at least Bartholin notes that imagination provided a pretext for believing she had been impregnated by a cat in her bed. Strangely, one scholar repeats the story but assigns it a date of 1643: Walter Landauer, “Hybridization between animals and man as a case of congenital malformations: fancies and superstitions in old and new world history,” *Archives d’anatomie, d’histologie et d’embryologie normales et experimentales* 46 (1961): 153–64; here 158. It is impossible to be sure whence Martin’s purported quotation came, but it perhaps significant to note that Martin Schurig, *Syllepsilogia historico-medica: hoc est Conceptionis muliebris consideratio physico-medico-forensis [etc.]* (Dresden and Leipzig: Christoph Hekel, 1731), notes but one observation by Bartholin of a *foetus capite felino*, at 622, and that is the passage from Bartholin’s *Historia* cited above. Accordingly, from the documentation available to me, it is impossible to say with certainty whether this event related in so many modern books and journals by otherwise reliable scholars and scientists ever really took place under the circumstances and in the manner related.

<sup>45</sup> The record of the proceedings against Spencer is contained in the quasi-official *Records of the colony and plantation of New-Haven, from 1638 to 1649: transcribed and edited in accordance with a resolution of the General Assembly of Connecticut: with occasional notes and an appendix*, ed. Charles J. Hoadly (Hartford, CT: Case, Tiffany and Co., 1857), the accusation appearing in pp. 62–65; his trial in pp. 66–69; and his execution in pp. 72–73.

apparently the accused, one William Hogg, at least had the good sense to keep his mouth shut, and the prosecution lacking the requisite two witnesses, he was acquitted despite his unfortunate last name.<sup>46</sup>

Originally skeptical of hybrids born of human-animal couplings, that father of forensic-medicine, Paolo Zacchia in his *Questiones medico-legales*, having addressed and discounted any objections that could be gleaned from Aristotle or Galen, including the issue of whether dogs and humans were **too** dissimilar to interbreed, and in particular rejecting *inter alia* the notion of fixed terms of pregnancy in favor of the view that birth occurs whenever the foetus is fully developed, contrary to Aristotle and Albertus Magnus for whom gestation period was the indicator *par excellence* of potential hybridization, clearly had become convinced not only that such manner of hybridization was possible, but that alternative views such as impression, particularly during the course of pregnancy, held by his friend Pietro Castelli, were leading to the reported increase in monsters born of human-beast couplings, providing as it were a defense to the otherwise unthinkable.<sup>47</sup> Another possible defense was the one antiquary Anthony Wood provided for the

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<sup>46</sup> The proceedings against Hogg are contained in *Records of the colony and plantation of New-Haven, from 1638 to 1649*, see preceding note. The record indicates that Hogg had been held on suspicion of intercourse with his mistress's pig for a period of two or three months following the sow's delivery of malformed offspring; but while convicted February 2, 1646 of other offenses, no determination of his guilt on the bestiality charge was made, and the matter never seems to have arisen again. *Ibid.*, 295–96.

<sup>47</sup> Paulo Zacchia, *Quaestionum medico-legalium tomi tres. Editio nova a variis mendis purgata passimque interpolata et novis recentiorum authorum inventis ac observationibus aucta, cura Joan. Danielis Horstii ... Annexus est index rerum notabilium locupletissimus* (Lyon: Anisson & Posuel, 1726), Consilium XXII: 29–32. In his conclusion, while expressing his belief that the birth was the result of bestiality, he puts forward possible defenses, the most viable, though certainly not without their difficulties, being either that some peculiarity of the Sicilian environment produces such births or that the birth was a molar pregnancy not requiring male semen and thus could be produced by a traumatic event: "Ex quibus, exclusis à causis horum monstrorum, imagination, & feminum vitiis, testator solum de feminum diversae specie commixtione suspicemur, unde haec mulier, quae Monstrum à te descriptum peperit, de nefando concubitu apud me suspecta est, & ad efficiendum ejus rei veritatem per haec indicia ad ulteriora esset procedendum. Nisi in ejus defensionem dicamus primò, ad Regionio naturam esse refendam hujusmodi monstrorum generationem, nam Siciliam Insulam feracem esse talium monstrorum, Tu ipse fateris. Aut dicamus secundò, hunc partum fuisse ex Molarum genere, & quae de latratu referebat mulier imaginatia potiùs, & ex Timore sibi, sus foetus latrare. Ad cujus rei confirmationem faceret ea opinio, quae convincit, Molas ex solo foemineo semine generari cum sanguinis confluxu ad uterum, potuit ergo fieri, ut mulier conspiciens Asinum coeuntem, & canum, in actu coitus semen proprium emisisset, ac conceperit, atque inde tales monstrosos partus ediderit, licet haec multa difficultate minimè careant." *Id.*, at 32. This consilium is dealt with at length in Francesco Paolo De Ceglia, "The Woman Who Gave Birth to a

1677 monstrous birth of Macconaught, when he suggested simple contamination of sperm and that the child in question had been sired by a human father “but a mastie dog or monkey gave the semen some sprinkling.”<sup>48</sup> In any event, it is clear that Jane Sharp was merely incorporating the best of medical and scientific opinion when she wrote in her manual for midwives that:

The matter is the seed, which may fail three several wayes, either when it is too much, and then the members are larger, or more than they should be, or too little, and then there will be some part or the whole too little, or else the seed of both sexes is ill mixed, as of men or women with beasts and certainly it is likely that no such creatures are born but by unnatural mixtures, yet God can punish the world with such grievous punishments, and that justly for our sins ... But the efficient cause of Monsters, is either from the forming faculty in the Seed, or else the strength of imagination joined with it; add to these the menstuous blood and the disposition of the Matrix; sometimes the mother is frighted or conceives wonders, or longs strangely for things not to be had, and the child is markd accordingly by it.<sup>49</sup>

It should not be surprising then that between the start of the scientific revolution in mid-sixteenth century with its dedication to empiricism and the end of the seventeenth century, more “documented” cases of human-animal hybrids were brought forward than in the entire Middle Ages, first because scientists were looking for them, and second, because scientists expected to see them.<sup>50</sup> Significant in terms of the incidence of such births is the absence of debate in France concerning administration of the sacrament of baptism to monstrous births until 1683 at the University of Louvain, at which time according to Martin<sup>51</sup> all the faculties of law and medicine in France held that baptism should be

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Dog, Monstrosity and Bestiality in Quaestiones Medico-Legales by Paolo Zacchia,” *Medecina Nei Secoli Arte e Scienza* 26.1 (2014): 117–44.

**48** Anthony Wood, *The Life and Times of Anthony Wood, Antiquary, of Oxford, 1632–1695*, ed. Andrew Clark (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1892), II:378; quoted in Courtney Thomas, “‘Not Having God Before his Eyes’: Bestiality in Early Modern England,” *The Seventeenth Century* 26 (2011): 149–73; here 161.

**49** Jane Sharp, *The midwives book, or, The whole art of midwifry discovered: Directing child-bearing women how to behave themselves in their conception, breeding, bearing, and nursing of children in six books* (London: Simon Miller, 1671), 116–18.

**50** This, of course, raises the interesting question of whether scientists assembled such inventories of the “monstrous” which turned out to be useful as part of some larger program as advanced by Park and Daston, “Unnatural Conceptions,” note 34 above, or whether instances of specific “monstrous” occurrences were recorded because they shed light upon certain issues in contemporary biology as suggested by Javier Moscoso, “Monsters as Evidence: The Uses of the Abnormal Body During the Early Eighteenth Century,” *Journal of the History of Biology* 31 (1998): 355–82.

**51** Martin, *Histoire des monstres* (see note 44), 214.

afforded all such births. It might be noted, however, that *Les lois ecclésiastiques de France*<sup>52</sup> as collected by Héricourt, adhered in the eighteenth century to the principle that baptism should be refused to any birth not cephalically human.

It is true that during the seventeenth century some scientists and physicians questioned the viability of sexual generation of human-animal hybrids. As late as 1699, Dr. Edward Tyson of the Royal Society delivered a detailed description with illustration of the “man-pig” of Staffordshire, endeavoring to disprove bestial generation in favor of alternative causes such as pressure on the womb.<sup>53</sup> Unfortunately, the explanation of monstrous births in terms of the failure of development processes due to external factors was more compatible with epigenesis than preformationism, and despite the agreement of a giant like William Harvey with Aristotle,<sup>54</sup> until the end of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth century, preformationism was the dominant paradigm of embryology,<sup>55</sup> despite a renewed interest in epigenesis engendered by

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52 “Quand une femme accouche d’une production monstreuse, qui n’a point de forme & de figure humaine, surtout par rapport à la tête, on ne lui donne pas le Baptême” (When a woman gives birth to monstrous progeny that has no human form or figure, above all with respect to the head, one cannot give him Baptism). Louis de Héricourt, *Les lois ecclésiastiques de France dans leur ordre naturel, et Une analyse des livres du droit canonique conferez avec les usages de l’église Gallicane* (Paris: Mariette, 1743), Tome II, Partie III, Chapitre 1: De Sacramens en General, XIX.

53 “By the description of the following Monsters I design to prove that the distortion of the parts of a *Fætus*, may occasion it to represent the Figure of different animals, without any real Coition betwixt the two species.” Edward Tyson “A Relation of Two Monstrous Pigs, with the Resemblance of Humane Faces, and Two Young Turkeys Joined by the Breast, by Sir John Floyer, Communicated by Dr. Edward Tyson, Fellow of the College of Physicians, and R. S.,” *Philosophical Transactions* (1683–1775) 21 (1753): 431–35; here 431. Tyson, of course, is considered a father of comparative anatomy, and is well-known for his efforts to dispel myths regarding hybrids, as evidenced by his most famous publication along with Michael van der Gucht, *Orang-outang, sive, Homo sylvestris, or, The anatomy of a pygmie compared with that of a monkey, an ape, and a man: to which is added, A philological essay concerning the pygmies, the cynocephali, the satyrs and sphinges of the ancients: wherein it will appear that they are all either apes or monkeys, and not men, as formerly pretended* (London: Printed for Thomas Bennet ... and Daniel Brown ... and are to be had of Mr. Hunt, 1699). It should be noted that what Tyson dissected was not the “Ourang Outang” of Bontius, see note 43 above, but in fact a chimpanzee.

54 William Harvey, *Exercitationes De Generatione Animalium: Quibus Accedunt Quædam De Partu, De Membris Ac Humoribus Uteri & De Conceptione* (London: Typis Du-Gardianis, 1651).

55 There is also, of course, a larger cultural and social context of the debates, dealt with in a fascinating manner by Clara Pinto-Correia, *The Ovary of Eve: Egg and Sperm and Preformation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997).

the 1759 dissertation of Caspar Friedrich Wolff.<sup>56</sup> This was based largely on the experiments of Joseph of Aromatari with respect to seeds in which he claimed to detect microscopic version of the plant itself,<sup>57</sup> and those of Jan Swammerdam<sup>58</sup> and Marcello Malpighi, in which they insisted that through microscopic examination of chicken eggs, and in the case of Swammerdam, fish and insect eggs as well, they detected tiny little complete embryos even before incubation.<sup>59</sup> Is this what they saw? Consistent with our basic framework, the answer is surely this is

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**56** Caspar Friedrich Wolff, *Theoria Generationis*. Dissertatio pro gradus doctoris medicinae, Halle (Halle a. d. S.: Johann Christian Hendel, 1759); <http://mdz-nbn-resolving.de/urn:nbn:de:bvb:12-bsb10977867-3> (last accessed on Feb. 10, 2020).

**57** Giuseppe degli Aromatari, *Dispytatio de rabie contagiosa, cui præposita est Epistola de generatione plantarum ex seminibus: qua detegitur, in vocatis seminibus contineri plantas verè conformatas, vt dicunt, actu / avctore, præstantissimi phylosophi [sic] & medici Fauorini filio Iosepho de Aromatariis Assisinate* (Venice: Giacomo Sarzina, 1625), the pertinent part of which was subsequently published as *An epistle writ by Iosephus de Aromatariis concerning the seeds of plants, and generation of animals*. Philosophical Transactions, vol. XVIII (London: Royal Society, 1694).

**58** Jan Swammerdam, *Biblia Naturae: Sive, Historia Insectorum, in Classes Certas Redacta, Nec Non Exemplis, Et Anatomico Variorum Animalculorum Examine, Aeneisque Tabulis Illustrata, Insertis Numerosis Rariorum Naturae Observationibus, Omnia Lingua Batava, Auctori Vernacula, Conscripta*, ed. Hieronymus D. Gaubius, and Herman Boerhaave (Leiden: I. Severinus, B. Vander Aa, Pieter Vander Aa, 1737), which was translated into English as: Jan Swammerdam, *The Book of Nature, Or, the History of Insects: Reduced to Distinct Classes, Confirmed by Particular Instances, Displayed in the Anatomical Analysis of Many Species, and Illustrated with Copper-Plates: Including the Generation of the Frog, the History of the Ephemerus, the Changes of Flies, Butterflies, and Beetles: with the Original Discovery of the Milk-Vessels of the Cuttle-Fish, and Many Other Curious Particulars*, ed. John Hill, Thomas Flloyd, and Herman Boerhaave (London: Printed for C.G. Seyffert, 1758). A useful discussion of Swammerdam's frog experiments with respect to embryology is contained in Sleigh, Charlotte. "Jan Swammerdam's Frogs," *Notes and Records of the Royal Society of London* 66 (2012): 373–92, online at: <https://dx.doi.org/10.1098%2Frsnr.2012.0039> (last accessed on Feb. 10, 2020); noting however, that she refers to Swammerdam's position as epigenetic, apparently in contrast to theories of metamorphosis or Francesco Redi's spontaneous generation, while in fact his argument can only be characterized as preformationism, of which he is usually considered a father. See Kimberly A. Buettner, "Jan Swammerdam (1637–1680)." *Embryo Project Encyclopedia* (2007-10-31); <http://embryo.asu.edu/handle/10776/1696> (last accessed on Feb. 10, 2020).

**59** Marcello Malpighi, *Dissertatio epistolica de formatione pulli in ovo* (London: Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society, 1673), republished as an appendix in *Anatome plantarum: Cui subjungitur appendix, iteratas & auctas ejusdem authoris de ovo incubato observationes continens. Regiæ societati, Londini ad scientiam naturalem promovendam institutæ, dicata* (Ghent: Johanne Martyn, 1675). For an extensive discussion of Malpighi's place in embryology as well as a translation of Malpighi's dissertation, see Howard B. Adelmann, *Marcello Malpighi and the Evolution of Embryology*, 5 vols. Cornell Publications in the History of Science (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1966).

what they perceived based largely on their cognitive imagination.<sup>60</sup> Indeed, Nicolas Hartsoeker, who held to a theory of spermism, a preformationist theory which developed as a competitor to the earlier preformationist theory of ovism once sperm cells were first seen microscopically in 1677, was clearly influenced particularly by Joseph of Aromatari's seed studies and suggested that with improvements in microscopes, it would ultimately be possible to observe his own hypothesized *homunculi*, or tiny complete humans, in sperm, for which he provided a diagram.<sup>61</sup> Only in the nineteenth century, with improvements in the microscope, was this great debate of the eighteenth century finally resolved in favor of epigenesis,<sup>62</sup> although the discovery of DNA codes in the twentieth century really represents a sort of synthesis of the two paradigms.

The triumph of epigenesis opened the door to wider acceptance of a far greater universe of teratological explanations, and with improved equipment, far more extensive opportunity for observation and experimentation; though it would also engender new controversies that would arguably marginalize teratology and the "monstrous" itself.<sup>63</sup> As a consequence, fewer cases of monstrous births were deemed true hybrids, in favor of less exotic explanations, although a number of "ape-humans" were attributed to maternal impression throughout the nineteenth century. Although this latter theory of teratogenesis was slowly abandoned in Europe through the eighteenth century and had largely vanished by the early nineteenth due largely to the inability to explain how such a mechanism worked, imprinting or impression as a legitimate theory of teratogenesis according to the noted Scottish physician and obstetrician, J. W. Ballantyne, survived in at least modified form throughout the nineteenth century and even into the early twentieth, albeit primarily in America, where the opinions of physicians such as William C. Dabney held considerable influence.<sup>64</sup> Indeed, the concept was partially revived

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<sup>60</sup> In fact, this problem of "experimental cognition" respecting Swammerdam is addressed in Jens Loescher, "How to See Through Swammerdam's Microscope," *Monatshefte* 108.1 (2016): 1–22. <https://muse.jhu.edu/article/612375> (last accessed on Feb. 10, 2020).

<sup>61</sup> *Essay de dioptrique* (Paris: Jean Anisson, 1694), 228–35. The diagram appears on page 230.

<sup>62</sup> See Cera R. Lawrence, "Preformationism in the Enlightenment," *Embryo Project Encyclopedia* (2008), online at: <http://embryo.asu.edu/handle/10776/1926> (last accessed on Feb. 10, 2020).

<sup>63</sup> See Evelleen Richards, "A Political Anatomy of Monsters, Hopeful and Otherwise: Teratogeny, Transcendentalism, and Evolutionary Theorizing," *Isis* 85 (1994): 377–411.

<sup>64</sup> J(ohn) W(illiam) Ballantyne, *Teratogenesis: An Inquiry into the Causes of Monstrosities. History of the Theories of the Past* (Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd, 1897), 42. Dabney's most influential writing was probably his chapter "Maternal impressions," *Cyclopaedia of the Diseases of Children*, ed. J. M. Keating, vol. 1 (Philadelphia, PA: J. B. Lippincott, 1890), 191–216. There were some strong dissents regarding the viability of this theory however, as witness Thomas Waddel, M.D., *Maternal Impressions: Report of the Obstetric Section of the Toledo Medical Association* (s.l.: s.n., 1896).



by Ian Stevenson, formerly of the University of Virginia School of Medicine, as late as 1992, to explain certain coincidences between mothers experiencing extreme visual impressions of skin anomalies in unrelated persons and subsequent birth of children with those same or similar marks.<sup>65</sup>

As to the possibility of sexually generated hybrids, scientists continued to pursue possible cross-fertilization well into the twentieth century, among the more famous experiments being those of the Soviet biologist, Ilya Ivanovich Ivanov.<sup>66</sup> Only later in the century was it determined that the primary obstacle was gametic incompatibility evidenced by biochemical analysis of the protein structures of egg and sperm,<sup>67</sup> which in a sense confirmed Galen's intuition of seminal *differentia*.<sup>68</sup>

On one level, this excursion may serve to underline John DeSesso's 2018 Warkany Lecture, "The Arrogance of Teratology,"<sup>69</sup> on another level to reinforce Kuhn's theory of the structure of scientific revolutions as dependent on retention of paradigms until data become so incommensurable that there is no choice but to discard them.<sup>70</sup> However, for our purposes, it also suggests a certain presumptuousness in asserting that clinging to long-standing precepts

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<sup>65</sup> Ian Stevenson, "A New Look at Maternal Impressions: An Analysis of 50 Published Cases and Reports of Two Recent Examples," *Journal of Scientific Exploration* 6.4. (1992): 353–73.

<sup>66</sup> See, e.g., Alexander Etkind, "Beyond Eugenics: The Forgotten Scandal of Hybridizing Humans and Apes," *Studies in History and Philosophy of Science Part C: Studies in History and Philosophy of Biological and Biomedical Sciences* 39. 2 (2008): 205–10.

<sup>67</sup> See, e.g., Ana Vieira and David J. Miller, "Gamete Interaction: Is It Species-Specific?," *Molecular Reproduction and Development* 73 (2006): 1422–29; <https://doi.org/10.1002/mrd.20542> (last accessed on Feb. 10, 2020). Many of the most detailed studies have been done on external rather than internal fertilization, though some of the biochemistry is relevant to the general issue of gametic compatibility of incompatibility. Cf. E(len) T. Kosman and D(on) R. Levitan, "Sperm Competition and the Evolution of Gametic Compatibility in Externally Fertilizing Taxa," *Molecular Human Reproduction* 20 (2014): 1190–97; A(rseniy), A. Lobov, A. L. Maltseva, et al., "The Molecular Mechanisms of Gametic Incompatibility in Invertebrates," *Acta naturae* 11.3 (2019): 4–15.

<sup>68</sup> "Quoniam primo quidem impossibilis est ipsi naturae corporum adeo differentium mixtio" (For in the first place, certainly a mixture of bodies different in their very natures is not possible.) and subsequently, "Nos autem, quibus de veritate, non de fabulis cura est, aperte scimus substantiam hominis, & equae omnino impermixtam existere" (We, however, care for the truth and not about fables, and we clearly know that the substance of man and horse can by no means exist mixed together). Galen, *De usu partium corporis humani* (see note 10), 3,1, 64 and 65, respectively.

<sup>69</sup> John M. DeSesso, "The Arrogance of Teratology" (see note 44).

<sup>70</sup> Thomas S. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*. 4th ed. (1962; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012). See now the contributions to *Paradigm Shifts during the Global Middle Ages and the Renaissance*, ed. Albrecht Classen. Arizona Studies in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, 44 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2019).

indicates an inability to distinguish between imaginary and material reality because those precepts later succumb to new and additional data, as does Le Goff; and worse yet, it indicates a failure to understand that without cognitive imagination, there is no perception of material reality to be had. Further, it suggests that not only should we realize the importance of the cognitive imagination for perception itself, but also as a basis for what we may call the creative imagination or the fictive impulse. Fiction, in turn, is heavily dependent upon the interests and values of a culture. The adherents of science during the Scientific Revolution for the most part did not discount the hand of God, or in more deist terms, Nature and Nature's God, but they were concerned more with **how** God did it within the context of what they believed was *ceteris paribus* a mechanistic universe of divine creation. Medieval theologians and philosophers did not deny the likelihood of regularities within God's universe, but however he did it, they were more interested in **why**. Phrased somewhat differently, medieval thinkers were more absorbed with first causes, early modern scientists with instrumental causes. Teratology does not inherently exclude either of these considerations. As Jane Sharp wrote in her handbook of midwifery:

What should be the causes of Monstrous Conceptions hath troubled many great Learned men. Alcabitius saith, if the Moon be in some Degrees when the child is conceived, it will be a Monster. Astrologers they seeke the cause in the stars, but Ministers refer it to the just judgements of God, they do not condemn the Parent or the Child in such cases, but take our blessed Saviours answer to his Disciples, who askt him, *who sinned the Parent or the Child, that he was born blind?* Our Saviour replied, *neither he nor his Parents, but that the Judgements of God might be made manifest in him.* In all such cases, we must not exclude the Divine vengeance; yet all these errors of Nature as to the Instrumental causes are either from the material or efficient cause of procreation.<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> *The Midwives Book* (see note 49), 116.

Birgit Wiedl

# Jews and Anti-Jewish Fantasies in Christian Imagination in the Middle Ages

Fantasy and imagination have always been an integral part of political and religious propaganda and polemics. The (perceived) unity of communities were based on shared fantasies of a better, more prosperous (after)life that, however, could only be achieved by restrictive criteria of acceptance into and exclusive solidarity within the group. To a greater effect, these positive images were, and are, often set off by the use of negative fantasies that evoke either disgust or fear (or both) and induce the community members to remain within the fold, while doubters or renegades were encouraged to see reason and seek to (re-)join it, by threat of punishment. Fantasies of a common enemy threatening the community from the outside therefore find their ways into most religious and political propaganda, from the Romans' 'barbaric tribes' and medieval 'heathens and/or heretics' to modern 'invading hordes of migrant caravans.' Defeating those enemies, or at least keeping them at bay, in a shared community effort is pictured as tantamount to the survival of said community. Internal enemies – those who have either managed to sneak their way into the community by pretending to be loyal members, or members who have 'turned against' the community – are presented in variations of conspiracy theories such as a perceived exploitation by the outsiders of community achievements that should be available exclusively for the community members, or are presented as inherently harmful to both individual members and the community as a whole.

Jews in (not only) medieval propaganda and polemics fit into all these categories; however, here is not the place for an in-depth analysis as to how and why Jews in the Middle Ages were both typical and atypical tools for this type of propaganda.<sup>1</sup> Medieval Christian fantasies about Jews were however a

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<sup>1</sup> The literature on the role(s) of political and religious polemics and/or Jews in medieval Christian culture is too vast even to attempt to cover the basic titles. Apart from the studies quoted below, let me point out Sita Steckel, "Verging on the Polemical. Towards an Interdisciplinary Approach to Medieval Religious Polemics," *Verging on the Polemical: Exploring the Boundaries of Medieval Religious Polemic across Genres and Research Cultures*. medieval worlds. comparative & interdisciplinary studies, 7 (2018), 2–60 (<https://medievalworlds.net/Oxc1aa5576%200x00390b10.pdf>; this and all following links were last accessed on Jan. 27, 2020).

constant in the everyday life of Jewish-Christian interactions. These fantasies occupied Christian minds and threatened Jewish lives on a permanent basis; they were manifold and encompassed much more than actual Jewish medieval existence. Narratives and their visual and audible translations established and reinforced the ideas of specific 'Jewish characteristics and traits' and, particularly, of 'Jewish crimes' that would and could be committed only by Jews, and embedded the idea of 'the Jew' in the Christian collective mind.

Above all, there was the Jews' 'arch-crime,' the killing of Christ, a crime the Jews, as a collective and as eternal enemies to Christianity, sought to commit time and time again. From this idea arose a series of alleged subsequent crimes Jews were thought to be particular guilty of,<sup>2</sup> translating the relatively abstract and complex theories into imaginative narratives and visual images that made those theological constructs palpable for the masses. Two narratives were particularly successful in this regard. The ritual murder allegation (blood libel), that is, the Jews' alleged (annual) murder of an abducted or bought Christian child, took off with Thomas Monmouth's legend of William of Norwich in 1144; the host desecration narrative resulted from a combination of earlier legends and served as a tool to enforce the new understanding of the host after the Fourth Lateran Council.<sup>3</sup> These ideas were mixed together with fantasies of how Jews (mostly negatively) influenced other aspects of Christian religious, economic, and everyday life – the Jewish usurer and the Jews' perceived favorable legal standing, the Jewish seducer who lures Christians back to their old wrong belief, the fraudulent convert who in secret clings to their old faith, the Jews' obduracy that made them willingly reject Christ,<sup>4</sup> and ideas of a Jewish conspiracy against

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<sup>2</sup> For an overview, see Jeremy Cohen, *Christ Killers. The Jews and the Passion from the Bible to the Big Screen* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 75–92 and 202–09.

<sup>3</sup> It is important to emphasize – or rather, as Miri Rubin, *Gentile Tales: The Narrative Assault on Late Medieval Jews*, 2nd ed. (1999; New Haven, CT, and London: Yale University Press, 1999; sec. ed.: Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), 3, stated – it should no longer be necessary to stress that there never was a Jewish ritual murder, a Jewish host desecration, a Jewish well-poisoning, or a Jewish conspiracy; and that the interest rates Jewish moneylender demanded off their Christian debtors were, in business reality, default interest rates that hardly ever applied; see Rainer Erb, "Die Ritualmordlegende: Von den Anfängen bis ins 20. Jahrhundert," *Ritualmord. Legenden in der europäischen Geschichte*, ed. Susanna Buttaroni and Stanisław Musiał (Vienna, Cologne, and Weimar: Böhlau, 2003), 11–20; here 12, Hans-Jörg Gilomen, "Wucher und Wirtschaft im Mittelalter," *Historische Zeitschrift* 250 (1990): 265–301; here 294.

<sup>4</sup> See, particularly, Peter the Venerable, *Against the Inveterate Obduracy of the Jews*, trans. and annotated by Irven M. Resnick. Fathers of the Church, Mediaeval Continuation, 14 (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2013).

Christianity of “messianic dimensions,”<sup>5</sup> to the point of a generally questionable existence of Jews in a Christian world.

In addition to their faith, the Jewish body, both female and (particularly) male, was also subjected to close scrutiny and found lacking. Ideas of the Jewish body such as the conception of a specific Jewish stench, the *foetor iudaicus*,<sup>6</sup> was contrasted with the heavenly fragrance associated with, particularly, Mary and the Saints. The menstruating Jewish men in Christian fantasies were considered not only unnatural but perverted, which in return resulted in mental deficiencies and a specific “Jewish irrationality.”<sup>7</sup> These ideas reinforced the conception of a general un-naturalness of the Jews that was reflected in their (collective and individual) appearance and behavior, and, ultimately, aimed at proving their un-humanness, and the un-humanness of their crimes, such as the ritual murders they committed out of their need for Christian blood: to cover up their stench and substitute the blood lost in their unnatural menstruation. Following Greek Church Fathers, Jews of both sexes were seen as carnal, lascivious beings with an overabundant sexual appetite and a penchant for deviant practises.<sup>8</sup> Equally suspicious was their language: despite existing knowledge of Hebrew among Christian scholars, they spun fantasies about the Jews’ secret, unnatural language which they used to cast spells and perform magic,<sup>9</sup>

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5 Israel Jacob Yuval, *Zwei Völker in deinem Leib: Gegenseitige Wahrnehmung von Juden und Christen in Spätantike und Mittelalter*. Jüdische Religion, Geschichte und Kultur 4. Trans. from the Hebrew by Dafna Mach (2000; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck&Ruprecht, 2007), 173 (also available as an English translation: *Two Nations in Your Womb: Perceptions of Jews and Christians in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages*, trans. from the Hebrew by Barbara Harshav and Jonathan Chipman (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2006).

6 For an overview from the Roman roots (Martial and Ammianus Marcellinus) to the interpretation in the Middle Ages, and the further development during the early modern times, see Julia Gebke, (*Fremd*)*Körper. Die Stigmatisierung der Neuchristen im Spanien der Frühen Neuzeit* (Vienna, Cologne, and Weimar: Böhlau, 2020), 243–308.

7 Irven M. Resnick, *Marks of Distinction: Christian Perception of Jews in the High Middle Ages* (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2012), 34–52 and 182.

8 Susanna Drake, *Slandering the Jew. Sexuality and Difference in Early Christian Texts* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013). (Alleged) sexual deviance and overindulgence was generally used as a polemical tool; see, e.g., for Christian anti-Islamic and Islamic anti-Christian polemics, Alexandra Cuffel, *Gendering Disgust in Medieval Religious Polemic* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2007), 145–49.

9 Johannes Heil, “Gottesfeinde”– “Menschenfeinde”. *Die Vorstellung von jüdischer Weltverschwörung (13. bis 16. Jahrhundert)*. Antisemitismus: Geschichte und Strukturen, 3 (Essen: Klartext Verlag, 2006), 65–204, et passim. See also Margaretha Boockmann, *Schrift als Stigma. Hebräische und hebraisierende Inschriften auf Gemälden der Spätgotik*. Schriften der Hochschule für Jüdische Studien Heidelberg, 16 (Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag Winter, 2013), who discusses both positive connotations with Hebrew

while, in contrast, Christian business partners of Jewish moneylenders had no qualms about Hebrew signatures on their deeds and even required them in lieu of seals.<sup>10</sup> Polemical literature and imagery also employed animals who were thought to have unnatural characteristics and/or behavior; their perceived unnaturalness was used as a reflection of the Jews' perverse nature.

The visceral power of the visual image was not unknown to the Middle Ages – in a mostly illiterate world and culture, images of any kind served as a crucial element of communication. Therefore, Jews were depicted and presented to the public in text and image according to how Christian scholars wanted them to be perceived. This *hermeneutical Jew* was invented by Christians for Christians and transmitted narratives for an exclusively Christian target audience. At its core a product of Christian imagination and fantasy, 'the Jew' had been designed to familiarize Christians with their own faith, to make complex theological and exegetical contents accessible to the Christian populace<sup>11</sup> – Christian fantasies, imaginations, and narratives were about imaginary Jews that served as a (negative) foil for Christian self-affirming purposes. In this context, every possible aspect of Jews and Jewishness was subjected to the Christian eye. Anti-Jewish propaganda, as strange as it may sound, was in many cases not primarily aimed at defaming and villainizing actual Jewish inhabitants,<sup>12</sup> but should, with its depiction of specific Jewish and therefore undesirable characteristics, provide the Christian audience with a counter-example that stood in sharp contrast to the correct behavior and correct faith and would both strengthen the faithful and warn the doubting. As such, Jews, or 'the Jew,' were not only utilized as a means of Christian self-assurance but could serve a double (or multiple) purpose: these narratives were also employed to preach theological concepts to a broader

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(e.g., 167–68 in the context of depictions of Mary), and negative associations (e.g., Hebrew letters on uniforms of Roman soldiers) and stresses the generally ambivalent attitude.

<sup>10</sup> Andreas Lehnertz, "Judensiegel im spätmittelalterlichen Reichsgebiet. Beglaubigungstätigkeit und Selbstrepräsentation von Jüdinnen und Juden," Ph. D. diss., University of Trier, 2017, 33–36 and 129–31, Eveline Brugger, "Jüdisches Urkundenwesen und christliche Obrigkeiten im spätmittelalterlichen Österreich," *Die Urkunde. Text – Bild – Objekt*, ed. Andrea Stieldorf. Das Mittelalter. Perspektiven mediävistischer Forschung, Beiheft, 12 (Berlin and Boston: Walter de Gruyter, 2019), 19–40; here 30–31 and 33–37.

<sup>11</sup> Jeremy Cohen, *Living Letters of the Law: Ideas of the Jews in Medieval Christianity* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1999), on the general concept, 1–21; see here 2–3.

<sup>12</sup> On anti-Jewish polemics without Jews, see the works of Anthony Bale on post-expulsion England (1290): Anthony Bale, *Feeling Persecuted: Christians, Jews and Images of Violence in the Middle Ages* (London: Reaktion Books, 2010); and id., *The Jew in the Medieval Book: English Antisemitisms 1350–1500*. Cambridge Studies in Medieval Literature, 60 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

public, or to enforce political and/or economic goals.<sup>13</sup> A good example for this utilization are the host desecration legends whose ‘success story,’ both in textual and visual form, began with the declaration of the transubstantiation dogma pronounced at the Fourth Lateran council in 1215.<sup>14</sup> The new veneration of the host, at its core a highly complex theological construct, had to be brought to the average populace and made (more) easily understandable to them; among other means (such as the Feast of Corpus Christ with its processions and presentations of the host), already established Christian fantasies of the Jewish Christ killer<sup>15</sup> were put to use and combined with narratives and images of the host equalling the body of Christ. In the course of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, countless narratives played with Christian fantasies about the numerous ways Jews would maltreat host wafers. Most of these legends and their visual translations combined the usage of regional events, names, and sites that aimed at achieving a greater sense of familiarity and authenticity for the audience, with a selection from the

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**13** See, e.g., the study by Markus Wenninger, “Die Instrumentalisierung von Ritualmordbeschuldigungen zur Rechtfertigung spätmittelalterlicher Judenvertreibungen,” *Ritualmord* (see note 3), 197–212.

**14** The best analysis of the host desecration allegation is still the one by Miri Rubin, *Gentile Tales* (see note 3).

**15** The main narrative that translated this concept into widely understandable imagery is the ritual murder accusation (blood libel) that arose in mid-twelfth century and basically focused on the idea that Jews annually killed (mostly) a Christian boy in lieu of Christ, whose blood they needed for their rituals. The literature on this topic is vast, among the most recent publications I want to point out Jeremy Cohen’s *Christ Killers* (see note 2); Emily Rose, *The Murder of William of Norwich: The Origins of the Blood Libel in Medieval Europe* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), and the anthology *Ritualmord* (see note 3). Thomas of Monmouth’s recording (or invention) of William of Norwich’s death/martyrdom is usually seen as the first fully-fledged blood libel, of which Miri Rubin has recently done a new edition and translation, Thomas of Monmouth, *The Life and Passion of William of Norwich*, ed. and trans. by Miri Rubin (London: Penguin Classics, 2015); on the aspect of the strong(er) emotions the killing of a child evoked, see Diane Peters Auslander, “Victims or Martyrs: Children, Anti-Judaism, and the Stress of Change in Medieval England,” *Childhood in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance: The Results of a Paradigm Shift in the History of Mentality*, ed. Albrecht Classen (Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2005), 105–34. On a possibly earlier (or different) origin in Würzburg, see Yuval, *Zwei Völker* (see note 5), 175–78; on the aspect of Jewish blood magic, see Heil, “*Gottesfeinde*” (see note 9), 211–25. Editor’s note: see now also Paola Tartakoff, *Conversion, Circumcision, and Ritual Murder in Medieval Europe*. The Middle Ages Series (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2020). The interest in this critical aspect in the relationship between Jews and Christians continues to grow exponentially. This book was only announced when our volume was completed. But see my review in *sehpunkte* (forthcoming) with some critical comments regarding the evaluation of the sources talking about apostasy, which had probably much more to do with imagination than with facts.

pool of well-established ‘set pieces.’<sup>16</sup> These two sets of familiar elements assured the audience of the outcome: the predestined victory of Christ and Christianity, which had yet to happen on grounds of divine justice and not due to a numeric and/or political dominance. This strategy of balancing suspense and safe outcome can be seen as a common denominator for most anti-Jewish narratives.

## Synagoga

Jews appear in medieval Christian imagination in many forms and with many faces. They were, first and foremost, an impersonation of their faith, the “old covenant.” As such, their personification, *Synagoga*, stood side by side to her younger sister, *Ecclesia*, in many medieval cathedrals, both as statues and as stained glass, and adorned many medieval manuscripts.<sup>17</sup> *Ecclesia*, with her crown, her upright position, and the varying other elements (such as the cross, the orb, churches or chalices) is clearly marked as victorious, while *Synagoga*’s

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**16** Miri Rubin has outlined the main ‘Persons and Places’ that appear in the majority of the host desecration legends, see Rubin, *Gentile Tales* (see note 3), 70–92.

**17** Literature on *Ecclesia* and *Synagoga*, particularly as statues, is vast; see, for instance, Nina Rowe, *The Jew, the Cathedral, and the Medieval City: Synagoga and Ecclesia in the Thirteenth Century* (2011; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014); Herbert Jochum, “Ecclesia und Synagoga. Alter und Neuer Bund in der christlichen Kunst,” *Der ungekündigte Bund. Antworten des Neuen Testaments*, ed. Hubert Frankemöller. Quaestiones Disputatae, 172 (Freiburg i. Br., Basel, and Vienna: Herder, 1998), 248–76; Annette Weber, “Glaube und Wissen – Ecclesia et Synagoga,” *Wissenspopularisierung: Konzepte der Wissensverbreitung im Wandel*, ed. Carsten Kretschmann. Wissenskultur und gesellschaftlicher Wandel, 4 (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2003), 89–126; from the angle of discourse analysis, see Gunnar Mikosch, “Ecclesia und Synagoge: Allegorie zwischen heilsgeschichtlichem Machtanspruch und christlichem Identitätskonflikt,” *Visibilität des Unsichtbaren: Sehen und Verstehen in Mittelalter und Früher Neuzeit*, ed. Anja Rathmann-Lutz (Zürich: Chronos, 2009), 159–82. Most recently, Markus Wenninger, “[Working title] How come the Jews ended up amongst the damned? The Raise of the Anti-Jewish Ecclesiastical Propaganda in Large-Scale Mediaeval Sculpture,” *Medieval Ashkenaz. Papers held at the 17th World Congress of Jewish Studies in Honour of Alfred Haverkamp*, ed. Christoph Cluse und Jörg R. Müller (forthcoming 2020), has discussed these sculptures and their anti-Jewish propaganda content. My thanks to Markus Wenninger for letting me consult the manuscript. Jörg Widmaier showed an unusual placing of *Ecclesia* and *Synagoga* at a baptismal font in his article “Simeon am Taufbecken von Beckum-Vellern. Mehrfachlesbarkeit und Intellektualisierung eines liturgischen Artefakts,” *Abrahams Erbe: Konkurrenz, Konflikt und Koexistenz der Religionen im europäischen Mittelalter*, ed. Klaus Oschema, Ludger Lieb, and Johannes Heil. Das Mittelalter. Perspektiven mediävistischer Forschung, Beihefte, 2 (Berlin, Munich, and Boston: Walter de Gruyter, 2015), 542–57.



attributes reflect many of the ideas Christians harbored about Jews and their faith. The broken staff, the crown slipping off her head, and the tablets of law falling from her hands mark the end of her reign; and while she is a beautiful woman with a still somewhat upright bearing (in contrast to later renditions), the angles of her body signify not only defeat but also carry in its twisted shape a (sub)text of lewdness and (sexual) depravity – a beauty that is not to be admired but to be feared and despised.<sup>18</sup> The most important anti-Jewish signifier is the blindfold that is placed across her eyes (see Fig. 1).



**Fig. 1:** The Blind Synagoga, ca. 1220; Bamberg Cathedral, Franconia/Germany  
(© Birgit Wiedl)

It is the visual translation of an anti-Jewish trope that has its roots in early Christian writings: the obduracy of the Jews who, even in the face of Christ, do not recognize him. This idea took a significant turn for the worse during the high Middle Ages when the ignorance of the Jews was replaced by ideas of Jews recognizing and still rejecting Christ, and killing him through ritual murders

<sup>18</sup> Weber, “Glaube” (see note 17), 104, Wenninger, “Anti-Jewish Ecclesiastical Propaganda” (see note 17), at footnote 27, who also points out that (at least in Bamberg) *Ecclesia* stands with her back firmly to the church wall, while Synagoga literally stands apart, outside the church (at footnotes 23–24). On Synagoga’s carnality, see also Sara Lipton, *Images of Intolerance: The Representation of Jews and Judaism in the Bible moralisée* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, CA, and London: California University Press, 1999), 24.

and host desecration not regardless of, but because of his true holy nature<sup>19</sup> – an “act of deliberate disbelief”<sup>20</sup> in which they consciously chose not to acknowledge him.

This powerful image was also made use of in items of less accessibility, namely manuscripts such as evangeliaries and prayer books.

Perhaps the most famous are the numerous *Ecclesia* and *Synagoga*-depictions in the French *Bible moralisée* of 1223/26 (ÖNB Cod. 2554) that has the pairing appear on almost every illuminated page and shows them as rivals for the dominance of the children of Christ.<sup>21</sup> The two also pop up in manuscripts less centred on their rivalry, e.g. (to name but a few that are accessible online), as illustration of an initial in a French missale (with *Ecclesia* in a blue cloak and *Synagoga*, slightly to the back, in an almost garish red dress with golden embellishment),<sup>22</sup> or in an evangeliary from around 1220, where both *Ecclesia* and *Synagoga* appear only as torso, hovering under the crucified Christ’s arms.<sup>23</sup> Among the miniatures of the *Bute Psalter*, a small prayer book from around 1285, the pairing is shown again with some of their usual attributes but in a more unusual setting (see Fig. 2).

*Ecclesia* is the mid-page illustration for the initial D (followed by Psalm 45,2), while *Synagoga* is relegated to the bottom of the page. *Ecclesia*, with her dress and cloak, her chalice and cross-staff, is clearly marked as victorious. Despite her appropriate (blue!) dress, *Synagoga* is not only missing the cloak,<sup>24</sup> but she is thwarted by her gesture of defeat; the tablets that have already

<sup>19</sup> Cohen, *Living Letters* (see note 11), 339, places these changes in perception in the context of the thirteenth-century papal policy and the emergence of the mendicant orders.

<sup>20</sup> Anna Sapir Abulafia, *Christian-Jewish Relations 1000–1300: Jews in the Service of Medieval Christendom* (London: Routledge, 2011), 167.

<sup>21</sup> Weber, “Glaube” (see note 17), 94–95 and 104; Silke Tammen, “Verkörperungen: *Ecclesia* und *Philosophia* in der *Bible Moralisée* (Codex 2554 der Österr. Nationalbibliothek, Wien),” *Mitteilungen der Gesellschaft für Vergleichende Kunstforschung in Wien* 52 no. 2/3 (2000): 6–9; Lipton, *Images of Intolerance* (see note 18, mainly focussed on ÖNB Cod. 1179 and 2554); ead., *Jews in the Commentary Text and Illustrations of the Early Thirteenth-Century Bibles Moralisées* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1991).

<sup>22</sup> *Missale ad usum ecclesiae Parisiensis cum notis*, Bibliothèque de l’Arsenal, Ms-622 réserve, fol. 131r, <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b55006386w/f279.item>.

<sup>23</sup> Badische Landesbibliothek, Speyerer Evangeliar Bruchsal 1, fol. 31r, <https://digital.blb-karlsruhe.de/blbhs/content/pageview/1217380>.

<sup>24</sup> On the importance of the cloak (to be considered adequately dressed) see Wenninger, “Anti-Jewish Ecclesiastical Propaganda” (see note 17), at footnote 27.

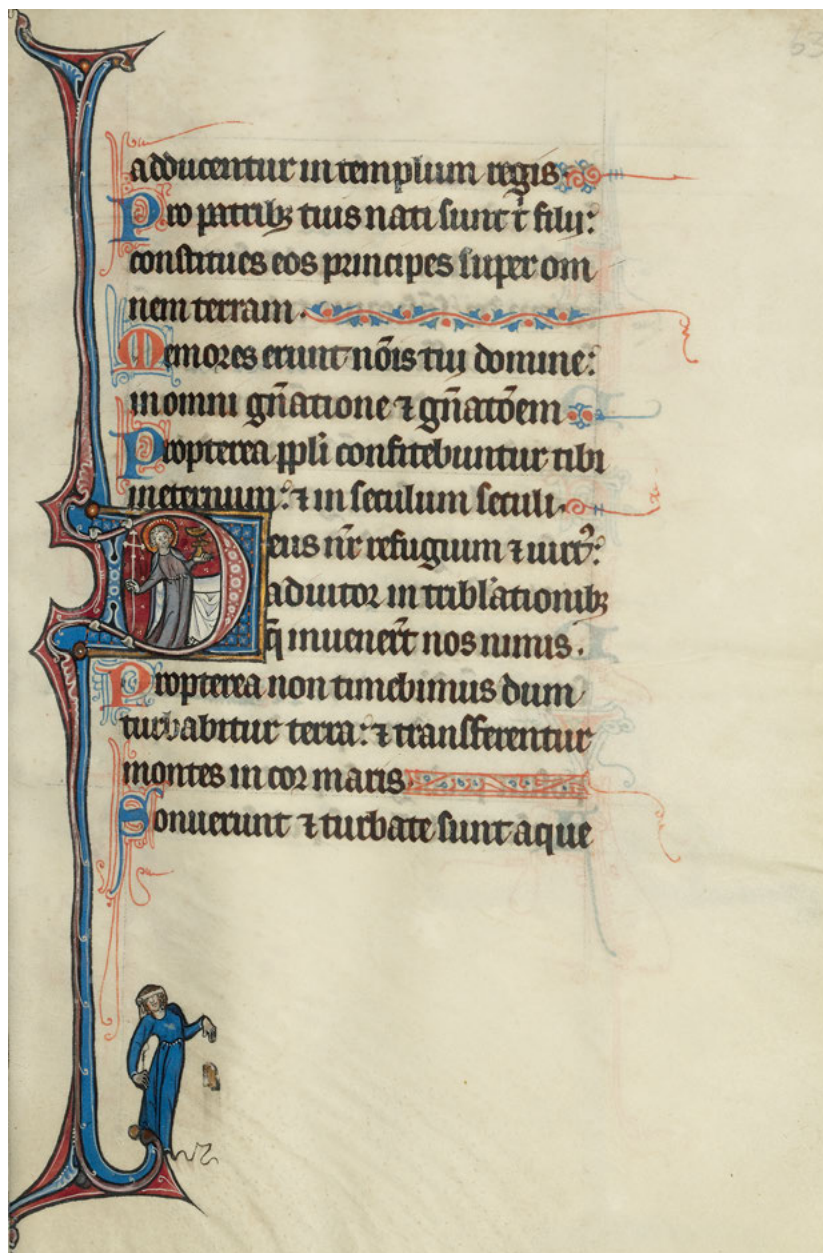


Fig. 2: Ecclesia and Synagoga as marginals, ca. 1280; J. Paul Getty Museum, Ms. 46 (92.MK.92), fol. 63r (digital image courtesy of the Getty's Open Content Program)

fallen from her outstretched hand and the (slipped-up?) blindfold emphasize the place at the bottom of the page which she was allocated.<sup>25</sup>

Another example, from a *Bible Historiale* from around 150 years later, presumably from the Alsacian town of Hagenau/Haguenau,<sup>26</sup> is a lot more explicit and leaves nothing to interpretation (see Fig. 3).

*Ecclesia*, with her usual insignia and wearing, again, a Marian-blue dress,<sup>27</sup> her long hair cascading down her back in beautiful waves, gazes up to the crucified Christ whose blood she is collecting in her chalice. *Synagoga*, beneath the other arm of the cross, is not only much less put-together with her sloppy dress: on her right shoulder sits a devil, with red horns and glowing eyes, whose arm, perhaps in a gesture to reach for *Synagoga*'s crown (or just having pushed it off her head?), covers her eyes instead of the blindfold. This resonates not only with the idea of the Jews' obstinate and deliberate blindness being rooted in sin (like the serpent that covers, e.g., Notre Dame's *Synagoga*'s eyes instead of the blindfold),<sup>28</sup> but also calls to mind iconographic programmes such as the devil blinding a Jew that had (according to eighteenth-century drawings) literally formed the base for Strassbourg's *Synagoga*, while Bamberg's statue stands on a Jew in the claws of the devil.<sup>29</sup>

Auditory elements were added to this visual image during the late medieval and early modern period in the form of plays. Only a few show a more lenient attitude toward the Jews and their personification, such as the *Amorbacher Spiel*

25 J. Paul Getty Museum, Ms. 46 (92.MK.92), fol. 63r, <http://www.getty.edu/art/collection/objects/244283/bute-master-initial-d-ecclesia-holding-a-cross-staff-and-a-chalice-and-synagoga-dropping-the-tablets-of-the-law-french-text-and-illumination-about-1285/>. On fol. 67v, God's refusal of the Jews' sacrifice is depicted, see <http://www.getty.edu/art/collection/objects/244308/bute-master-initial-d-god-refusing-the-jews-sacrifice-french-text-and-illumination-about-1285/>; while on fol. 104v. (an addition from around 1330), to the text of Psalm 75, God removes *Synagoga*'s blindfold: <http://www.getty.edu/art/collection/objects/127992/bute-master-initial-n-god-removing-synagoga-blindfold-french-text-and-illumination-about-1285/>.

26 Sächsische Landesbibliothek – Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek Dresden, Mscr.Dresd. A.50, fol. 189v, <https://digital.slub-dresden.de/werkansicht/dlf/14353/382/>.

27 Annette Weber has underlined the potential significance of colouring also for *Synagoga* – on the backside of the Strassbourg *Synagoga*, remnants of an ochre color can be found, which, belonging to the yellow colour family, was an widely understood indicator of sin, see Weber, "Glaube" (see note 17), 104–05.

28 [https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/f/f5/Ecclesia\\_et\\_synagoga\\_RTL.jpg](https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/f/f5/Ecclesia_et_synagoga_RTL.jpg). On other uses of the serpent as a blindfold, see the illustrations in Jochum, "Ecclesia" (see note 17).

29 Weber, "Glaube" (see note 17), 95–96 (Strassbourg); in Bamberg, a Jew is depicted in the devil's claws beneath the statue of *Synagoga*, see Wenninger, "Anti-Jewish Ecclesiastical Propaganda" (see note 17).



**Fig. 3:** Ecclesia and Synagoga with the Cross, ca. 1420; Sächsische Landesbibliothek – Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek Dresden, Mscr.Dresd.A.50, fol. 189v (SLUB Dresden)

von *Mariae Himmelfahrt* (Amorbach Play of Assumption) that has *Ecclesia* and *Synagoga* fight for their beloved, Christ, with Christ however not repudiating *Synagoga* but inclined to accept her back into his (albeit now Christian) fold.<sup>30</sup> On stage, however, dark, simple, and torn clothes that covered an old woman who, according to a report from a performance of a play that included *Ecclesia* and *Synagoga* in Avignon in 1385, left the stage crying, contrasted visibly with the beautiful *Ecclesia* with her golden crown and was induced to generate if not disgust and hatred, so at least derision and laughter.<sup>31</sup> Most of these plays were, however, designed to add further spite to the image, in their vicious depictions of *Synagoga* and their children. Hans Folz, for example, had her lusting after pork sausages in his *Der Juden und der Christen streit vor kaiser Constantinus* (1473), a mock-version of the high medieval disputations of *Ecclesia* and *Synagoga*,<sup>32</sup> tying the image in with the vicious mockings on *Judensau* broadsheets that, like the almost aggressively obscene Frankfurt *Judensau*, allude to the clandestine consumption of pork by the Jews, or at least their unquenchable craving for it.<sup>33</sup>

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**30** Kira Preen, *Antijüdische Stereotype und Vorurteile in mittelalterlichen Legenden* (Marburg: Tectum Verlag, 2013), 130–32. The Amorbach Play seems to have been aimed at a more educated audience, see Weber, “Glaube” (see note 17), 92. For a still seminal study on Jews in medieval plays, see Edith Wenzel, ‘Do worden die Judden alle geschant:’ *Rolle und Funktion der Juden in spätmittelalterlichen Spielen*. *Forschungen zur Geschichte der älteren deutschen Literatur*, 14 (Munich: Fink, 1992).

**31** Preen, *Antijüdische Stereotype* (see note 30), 132, footnote 671.

**32** Winfried Frey, “Antijüdische Tendenzen in einem Fastnachtspiel des Hans Folz. Einige Aspekte zum Unterrichtsthema ‘Antisemitismus,’” *Wirkendes Wort* 32.1 (1982): 1–19, here 13–14; Edith Wenzel, “Synagoga und Ecclesia – Zum Antijudaismus im deutschsprachigen Spiel des späten Mittelalters,” *Internationales Archiv für Sozialgeschichte der deutschen Literatur* 12 (1987): 57–81, here 72–73, see also Winfried Frey, “The Intimate Other: Hans Folz’ Dialogue between ‘Christian and Jew,’” *Meeting the Foreign in the Middle Ages. Xenological Approaches in Medieval Phenomena*, ed. Albrecht Classen (New York and London: Routledge, 2002), 249–67; on the frequent use of anti-Jewish stereotypes in Hans Folz’s plays, see also Claudia Daiber, “Polemics Investigated in a Late-Fifteenth-Century *Fastnachtspiel* (Shrovetide play),” *Verging on the Polemical. medieval worlds* 7 (see note 1), 114–36 (<https://medievalworlds.net/Oxc1aa5576%200x00390b25.pdf>).

**33** Birgit Wiedl, “Laughing at the Beast: The Judensau. Anti-Jewish Propaganda and Humor from the Middle Ages to the Early Modern Period,” *Laughter in the Middle Ages and Early Modern Times. Epistemology of a Fundamental Human Behavior, its Meaning, and Consequences*, ed. Albrecht Classen. *Fundamentals of Medieval and Early Modern Culture*, 5 (Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2010), 325–64, here 344–48. On the employment of Jewish dietary laws in Christian (polemical) perception of Jews, see Resnick, *Marks of Distinction* (see note 7), 144–74.

## How to Recognize a Jew, Part I: How He Looks

Around 1340, Archbishop Balduin of Trier had an illuminated manuscript commissioned, today known eponymously as *Codex Balduini*.<sup>34</sup> In 73 illustrations (coloured quill drawings), it tells the story of Balduin and, particularly, his elder brother, Emperor Henry VII up to the death of the latter in 1313. The main focus is on Henry's *Romfahrt* and his coronation, and among the illustrations showing him being elected, crossing the Alps, entering Rome and being crowned, there is an depiction showing him and his entourage meeting group of people who would have been recognizable as Jews to the contemporary viewer of the manuscript even if they wouldn't have been able to read the legend: *Imperator redit dans Judeis legem Moysi in rotulo*.

The respective headgears serve as a main identifying element as to who is who: Henry is wearing his (new) crown, the clergy, among whom one of them (carrying the orb, and most likely to be identified as Balduin himself) is mounted like him, wear red cardinal hats, while the noblemen behind them wear helmets. Opposing them are the Jews, depicted slightly lower and smaller, and all of them wear what was perhaps the most common visual mark that was used in medieval art to identify Jews: the *pileus cornutus*, the Jewish hat. Derived most likely from the phrygian cap, it is disputed whether the headgear which appears in both Christian and Hebrew manuscripts,<sup>35</sup> was actually a real

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<sup>34</sup> Landeshauparchiv Koblenz, Bestand 1 C Nr. 1. The manuscript is not online, but some of the illustrations can be found on the following websites: [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Category:Codex\\_Balduini\\_Trevirensis](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Category:Codex_Balduini_Trevirensis), <https://www.bildindex.de/document/obj32047855> (old photographs of the codex from the Bildarchiv Marburg) and here <https://www.landeshauptarchiv.de/service/landesgeschichte-im-archiv/blick-in-die-geschichte/archiv-nach-jahrgang/21011954>; a coloured rendition here: [http://www.vostlit.info/Texts/rus8/Bilderchronik\\_Heinrich/24.JPG](http://www.vostlit.info/Texts/rus8/Bilderchronik_Heinrich/24.JPG). See *Der Weg zur Kaiserkrone: Der Romzug Heinrichs VII. in der Darstellung Erzbischof Balduins von Trier*, ed. Michel Margue, Michel Pauly, and Wolfgang Schmid. Publications du CLUDEM, 24 (Trier: Kliomedia, 2009); and *Kaiser Heinrichs Romfahrt: Zur Inszenierung von Politik in einer Trierer Bilderhandschrift des 14. Jahrhunderts*, ed. Wolfgang Schmid. Mittelrheinische Hefte, 21 (Koblenz: Verlag der Landesarchivverwaltung Rheinland-Pfalz, 2000); and id., "Neue Forschungen zur Bilderhandschrift von 'Kaiser Heinrichs Romfahrt,'" *Trierer Bücherschätze im Mittelalter*, ed. Karl-Heinz Hellenbrand and Patrick Trautmann. Libri pretiosi, 11 (Trier: Moll, 2008), 33–42.

<sup>35</sup> E.g., in the famous zoocephalic Birds' Head Haggada, <https://www.imj.org.il/en/collections/199815>, and in the Leipzig Machsor, see Katrin Kogmann-Appel, *A mahzor from Worms. Art and Religion in a Medieval Jewish Community* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2012); an illustration can be found here: <http://davidkultur.at/artikel/das-822ritual-des-ersten-lernens-zu-schawuot-im-mittelalter> (Martha Keil, "Das 'Ritual des ersten Lernens' zu Schawuot im Mittelalter," *David: Jüdische Kulturzeitschrift* 69 [2006]: 5–7).



component of medieval Jewish costumes or had been used by Jewish artists to give the figures wearing it ‘an aura of sacred antiquity.’<sup>36</sup> While mid-thirteenth-century Church legislation in Ashkenaz sought to make the wearing of the Jewish hat mandatory as a distinguishing (and thus derogatory) attribute, its appearances in Christian manuscripts cover a wide range of attitudes: while its frequent usage in the various *Sachsenspiegel* manuscripts encompass both neutral<sup>37</sup> and more pejorative depictions (e.g., Jews are shown as criminals<sup>38</sup> or representatives of bad faith<sup>39</sup>), the ‘Master Lesir’ who appears on the first page of the *Judenbuch der Scheffstrasse*, a loan register of a small Viennese suburb from 1386, wears a Jewish hat and carries an axe that might signify judicial power – and interestingly enough, he is individualised by his name, unlike the anonymous Christian whose depiction heads the section on Christian loans.<sup>40</sup>

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**36** The debate to what extent Jews wore any headgear as part of their daily apparel is still ongoing, see Sara Lipton, *Dark Mirror. The Medieval Origins of Anti-Jewish Iconography* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2014), 16–45, Elisheva Baumgarten, *Practicing Piety in Medieval Ashkenaz: Men, Women, and Everyday Religious Observance* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014), 176–78. On the concept of clothing, including the hat, and other external religious symbols as an expression of communal identity, see Lukáš Reitingner and Daniel Soukup, “The Krumlov Liber Depictus: On its Creation and Depiction of Jews,” *Judacia Bohemiae* L.2 (2015): 5–44, here 20.

**37** Clerics and Jews who bear weapons do not fall under the extended imperial protection, Heidelberger Sachsenspiegel, UB Heidelberg, Cod. Pal. germ. 164, fol. 12v, <https://digi.ub.uni-heidelberg.de/diglit/cpg164/0038/image>, Markus Wenninger, “Die Juden in den Bilderhandschriften des Sachsenspiegels,” *Integration und Ausgrenzung: Studien zur deutsch-jüdischen Literatur- und Kulturgeschichte von der Frühen Neuzeit bis zur Gegenwart. Festschrift für Hans Otto Horsch*, ed. Mark H. Gelber, Jakob Hessing, and Robert Jütte (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer, 2009), 2–18, here 9–10.

**38** A Jew is shown being punished (hanged, or with his hand chopped off), with a chalice standing next to him, making evident his crime of having received stolen goods, Heidelberger Sachsenspiegel, UB Heidelberg, Cod. Pal. germ. 164, fol. 13v, <http://digi.ub.uni-heidelberg.de/diglit/cpg164/0040>; see Joseph Shatzmiller, *Cultural Exchange: Jews, Christians, and Art in the Medieval Marketplace* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2013), 37–38; Wenninger, “Juden in den Bilderhandschriften” (see note 37), 12–14; Birgit Wiedl, “Anti-Jewish Polemics in Business Charters from Late Medieval Austria,” *Verging on the Polemical. medieval worlds* 7 (see note 1), 61–79, here 64 ([http://www.medievalworlds.net/0xc1aa5576\\_0x00390b23.pdf](http://www.medievalworlds.net/0xc1aa5576_0x00390b23.pdf)).

**39** In the context of reasons for a legitimate excommunication of the emperor by the pope, the reason ‘doubts of rightful belief,’ a Jew is standing next to the emperor as an impersonation of doubt/bad faith, see Wenninger, “Juden in den Bilderhandschriften” (see note 37), 12–13.

**40** The *Judenbuch* is actually not a single codex but a section of a three-part title and mortgage register that also documents the loans of Christian moneylenders. Austrian State Archives, FHKA AHK VDA Urbare 1067A und B, 1068, the drawing on fol. 109r. All three parts of the codex have a drawing on their first page: on fol. 1r, there is a crown, standing for the Duchess of Austria, the manorial lady of the *Scheffstrasse*, and on fol. 38r, there is a Christian.



The Jewish hat was used as an indicator of a person's 'Jewishness' in many different contexts.<sup>41</sup> Statues and stain glass images of figures from the Old Testament were visible to the public audience in many Christian churches, and while some were visually pulled into the Christian sphere by giving them Christian-connotted insignia, many kings and prophets wore the Jewish hat,<sup>42</sup> making them recognizable as Jews. Perhaps the most famous non-derogatory depiction of a person wearing a Jewish hat is in the *Codex Manesse*,<sup>43</sup> the most extensive collection of German songs which are accompanied by altogether 138 page-size illustrations that show the great minnesingers of their time, ordered by rank: from Emperor Henry VI and his son to kings, dukes, and margraves down to the more 'common' singers.

On folio 355r (of 423) is a depiction of the minnesinger Süßkind of Trimberg,<sup>44</sup> whose famous lines in his song V,2 stating that he intends to grow a long grey beard and would live 'in old Jewish manner' have given reason to the speculation that he was indeed Jewish.<sup>45</sup> His true historical identity as Jewish or not (or his actual existence as a single person), however, is not really relevant with regard to my topic: *Sueskint der Jude von Trimperg*, reads the header, and with

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See Wiedl, "Anti-Jewish Polemics" (see note 38), 68–69; for an illustration, see Eveline Brugger, "Von der Ansiedlung bis zur Vertreibung – Juden in Österreich im Mittelalter," ead., Martha Keil, Albert Lichtblau, Christoph Lind, and Barbara Staudinger, *Geschichte der Juden in Österreich*. Sec. rev. ed. Österreichische Geschichte (2006; Vienna: Ueberreuter, 2013), 172. [http://www.injoest.ac.at/media/brugger\\_von\\_der\\_ansiedlung\\_bis\\_zur\\_vertreibung.pdf](http://www.injoest.ac.at/media/brugger_von_der_ansiedlung_bis_zur_vertreibung.pdf).

<sup>41</sup> For coins (of Jewish mint masters), see Eva Haverkamp, "Jewish Images on Christian Coins: Economy and Symbolism in Medieval Germany," *Jews and Christians in Medieval Europe: The Historiographical Legacy of Bernhard Blumenkranz*, ed. Philippe Buc, Martha Keil, and John Tolan (Turnhout: Brepols, 2016), 189–226, on Jewish seals, see Lehnertz, *Judensiegel* (see note 10), the seal of the Regensburg Jew Gnendel/Peter bar Mosche haLevi can be seen here: <http://www.medieval-ashkenaz.org/JS01/CP1-c1-02q7.html>.

<sup>42</sup> See, for example, the twelfth-century Windows of the Prophets in the Augsburg Cathedral, <https://bistum-augsburg.de/Bistum/Kathedrale/Romanische-Glasfenster>, that show Jona, Daniel, Hosea, Mose, and David, with the latter wearing an (imperial) crown while the others wear a Jewish hat.

<sup>43</sup> Universitätsbibliothek Heidelberg, Cod. Pal. germ. 848, Große Heidelberger Liederhandschrift (Codex Manesse), <https://digi.ub.uni-heidelberg.de/diglit/cpg848>. Literature on the Codex is way too vast even to be covered in selection here; instead, see the bibliography database at the aforementioned website.

<sup>44</sup> UB Heidelberg, Cod. Pal. germ. 848, fol. 355r, <https://digi.ub.uni-heidelberg.de/diglit/cpg848/0705>.

<sup>45</sup> A summary of the discussion is provided by Martin Przybilski, *Kulturtransfer zwischen Juden und Christen in der deutschen Literatur des Mittelalters*. Quellen und Forschungen zur Literatur- und Kulturgeschichte, 61/295 (Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2010), 267–79.

his Jewish hat and long(ish) beard,<sup>46</sup> the person of the illustration in the *Codex Manesse* was undoubtedly meant to be identified as a Jew. His clothes, however, are in no way different to those of his Christian counterparts, and even, compared to the renditions of other minstrels, of superior quality<sup>47</sup>: the main eye-catcher is his dark blue cape which is trimmed and lined with petit-gris, a fur clothing that was usually exclusive to nobility and church dignitaries – and in fact, the (anonymous) bishop who sits opposite him is dressed in the same manner.

However, Christian speculations as to in what ways and to what extent Jews were different from ‘normal’ humans had their imprint in Christian artists concerning themselves with the Jewish body and its specific characteristics, particularly the face. To single out Jews, visual measures were implemented to convey the idea of Jewish ‘otherness,’ elements such as the typically longer beard were joined by more exaggerated features such as flaming red hair<sup>48</sup> and a nose with a distinct, almost caricature-like curvature to it: if we take a closer look at the front figure of the Jews in the *Codex Balduini*, who is presumably representing the rabbi, his profile differs drastically from all the others (including the other Jews, though).<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> The bishop opposite him wears a shorter beard, and while there are several figures throughout the codex which are depicted with a beard, Süßkind’s is the only one that goes beneath the collarbone.

<sup>47</sup> Reitingner and Soukup, “The Krumlov Liber Depictus” (see note 36), 18 and fig. 7, points to a equally magnificently dressed figure of a Jew in the *Liber*, that of Judas’s father Ruben.

<sup>48</sup> See Andrew Colin Gow, *The Red Jews: Antisemitism in an Apocalyptic Age, 1200–1600*. Studies in Medieval and Reformation Thought, 55 (Leiden, New York, and Cologne: Brill, 1995). While the legendary Jewish people (result of a confluence of the biblical Gog and Magog, the Ten Lost Tribes and the episode on the heathens which Alexander the Great encounters in a part of the Alexander romance) appear in German medieval literature, Jews were more commonly depicted with red hair in English and French, and not so much in German art.

<sup>49</sup> Landeshauptarchiv Koblenz, Bestand 1 C Nr. 1, fol. 24r, [https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/2/25/Codex\\_Trevirensis\\_folio\\_24\\_recto.jpg](https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/2/25/Codex_Trevirensis_folio_24_recto.jpg). Lipton, *Dark Mirror* (see note 36), 197, and fig. 13, interprets it as the commissioner of the manuscript, Archbishop Balduin of Trier, brother of the Emperor, wishing to demonstrate the Emperor’s power over the Jews (by exerting visible control over their – imaginary – bodies), but misunderstands the scene as depicting the Emperor receiving the law from the Jews. On grotesque Jewish features contrasted with ‘noble’ Christian ones, see Jacqueline E. Jung, “The Passion, the Jews, and the Crisis of the Individual on the Naumburg West Choir Screen,” *Beyond the Yellow Badge. Anti-Judaism and Antisemitism in Medieval and Early Modern Visual Culture*, ed. Mitchell B. Merback (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 145–77; on Hieronymus Bosch’s usage of stereotyped Jewish faces, see Debra Higgs Strickland, “Monsters, Demons, and Jews in the Painting of Hieronymus Bosch,” *Monsters and Monstrosity in Jewish History: From the Middle Ages to Modernity*, ed. Iris Idelson-Shein and Christian Wiese (London: Bloomsbury, 2019), 42–68.

Starting around the late twelfth century, Christian artists used this physiognomic marker (although not exclusively for Jews) to which grotesque, uglifying elements such as thick lips and heavy-lidded eyes were added, while the beards became shaggy and beast-like.<sup>50</sup> Sara Lipton and Anthony Bale have tied these developments in the depiction of 'Jewishness' to a change in the perception and the visual presentation of Christ: from the late twelfth century on, Christ's human side was emphasized. He was depicted naked and suffering, even dying or dead, and the spectators should recognize the vulnerability, and no longer the divine ruler of the world. To make this new concept that met with contemporary critique palatable to the viewers, harsh-faced Jews were introduced whose features reflected their indifference of, or even delight in Christ's sufferings. Their ugliness and disfiguration all the more accentuated Christ's fragile beauty,<sup>51</sup> as much as the Jewish stench, the *foetor iudaicus* of already late antique origins, contrasted with the heavenly fragrance of Mary and several Saints. It does not necessarily convey an idea of the Jews' outer ugliness but reflects their inner ugliness and evilness, inasmuch as *Synagoga's* beauty does not carry positive connotations but a warning about beguiling, sinful beauty.

Perhaps the most drastic of these caricatures appears in a context that is not per se within the polemical realm: the infamous rendition of the Norwich Jews Isaac, Mosse-Mokke, and Abigail in the tallage-rolls of 1233, whose usage of grotesque facial features and surrounding demons caused Anthony Bale to use it literally as a depiction of his definition of medieval anti-Semitism.<sup>52</sup>

## From *Synagoga* to the Living Cross

The more violent Christian fantasies and imagination of Jews became, the more violent their visual representation grew. The development of the *Ecclesia-*

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50 Lipton, *Dark Mirror* (see note 36), 169–200; also Bale, *Feeling Persecuted* (see note 12), 65–75. On the general use of cartoonish, grotesque features, see Debra Higgs Strickland, *Saracens, Demons, & Jews: Making Monsters in Medieval Art* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2003), 77–78.

51 Bale, *Feeling Persecuted* (see note 12), 75.

52 The cartoon (British National Archives, Kew, E.410/1565, Rolls of the Issues of the Exchequer, Hilary Term 1233) can be seen here: [www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/education/resources/medieval-mystery/](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/education/resources/medieval-mystery/); Bale, *Jew in the Medieval Book* (see note 12), 2–4. On Bale's not entirely unproblematic differentiation between medieval anti-Judaism and anti-Semitism and the role of actual presence of Jews as a distinguishing element, see id., 1–21. On the caricature, see also Lipton, *Dark Mirror* (see note 36), 178–82.

*Synagoga* pairing into the “Living Cross” serves as a good example for the new levels of brutality and irreconcilability Christian art, and Christian attitude, showed. The precursor of the motif appears first in Herrad of Landsberg’s late twelfth-century’s *Hortus Deliciarum* where, under the left arm of the Cross, a blindfolded *Synagoga* rides a donkey and holds a goat; *Ecclesia* under the right arm rides the tetramorph<sup>53</sup> and holds the cross-staff, while the blood of the crucified Christ drops into the chalice in her other hand.<sup>54</sup> In thirteenth-century renditions such as the aforementioned *Scherenberg-Psalter* from 1260,<sup>55</sup> or the fresco at the Dominican church in Krems (Lower Austria) from around 1280 (see Fig. 4), the figures are still standing, without their mounts, yet *Synagoga* is turning her head away from the cross at a sharp angle. This angle was even more pronounced in some depictions such as the fourteenth-century stained glasses of the cathedral of Freiburg<sup>56</sup> (that also has an *Ecclesia-Synagoga* pairing as statues) where *Synagoga*’s head looks almost severed from her neck, as if anticipating the cruel changes to come.

The “fully developed” Living Cross shows four hands protruding from the cross, who, by smashing the Old Law (left hand), establishing the reign of the Church (right hand), defeat death (lower hand), and opening the gate to Paradise (upper hand), fulfill Christ’s redemption work.<sup>57</sup> The eldest of those is said to be the mural painting in the Holy Spirit church of today’s Slovakian town of Žehra that is dated from around 1300/1301 (with some question marks), where *Synagoga*, mounted on the goat and holding the goat’s head, stands slightly apart. The major change to the former depictions of the standing *Synagoga* could however not be more blatant. a sword from above is thrust through her head: *Synagoga* should not be defeated but destroyed. Beneath her

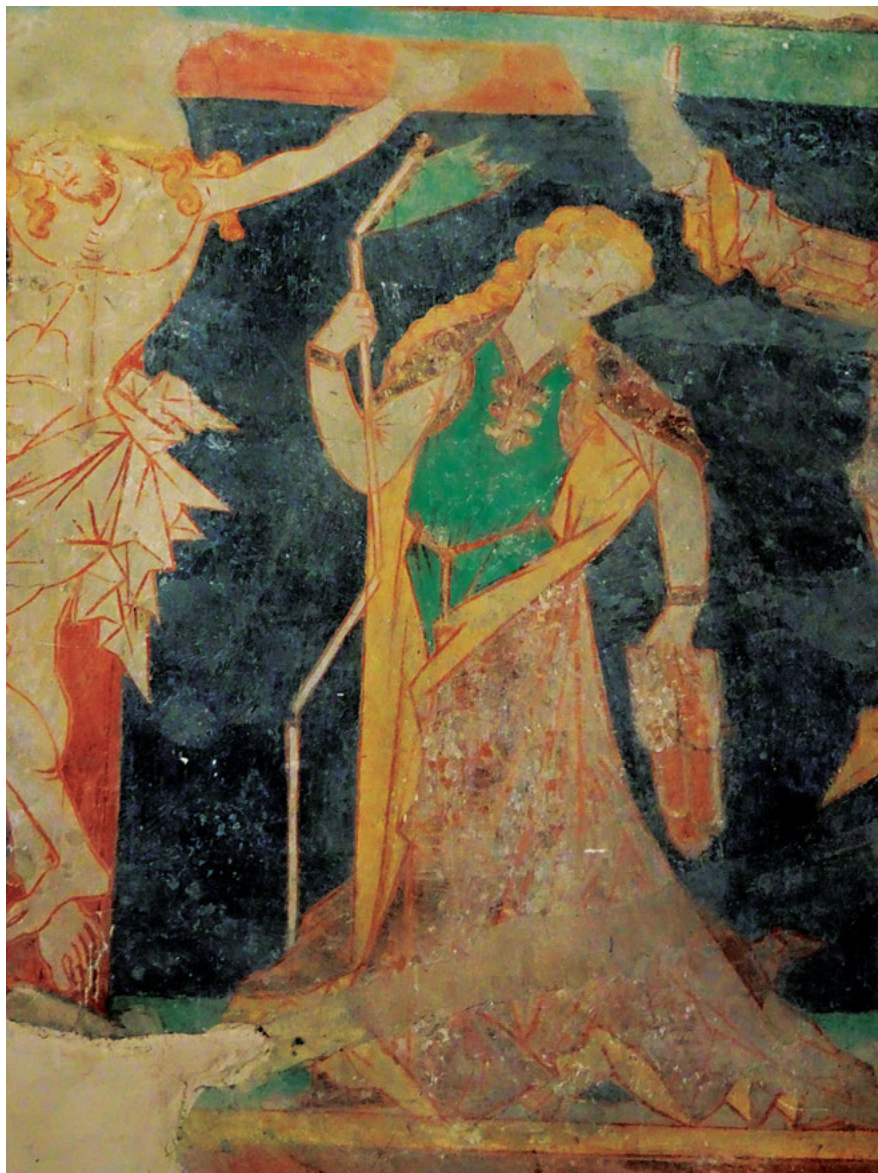
<sup>53</sup> For an interpretation of the tetramorph, see Jane Beal’s contribution to this volume (see note 30).

<sup>54</sup> [https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Datei:Hortus\\_Deliciarum,\\_Die\\_Kreuzigung\\_Jesu\\_Christi.JPG](https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Datei:Hortus_Deliciarum,_Die_Kreuzigung_Jesu_Christi.JPG).

<sup>55</sup> Badische Landesbibliothek, Cod. St. Peter perg. 139, fol. 8r, <https://digital.blb-karlsruhe.de/blbhs/Handschriften/content/pageview/1114157>.

<sup>56</sup> [https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/7/75/Glasfenster\\_S%C3%BCseite\\_%28M%C3%BCnster\\_Freiburg%29\\_jm2343.jpg](https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/7/75/Glasfenster_S%C3%BCseite_%28M%C3%BCnster_Freiburg%29_jm2343.jpg), *Ecclesia* and *Synagoga* are in the small top rosettes of the window to the right, with a crucifixion scene on top and Saints Paulus, Severus, Anthony, and Jacob minor below.

<sup>57</sup> See Claudia Blümle, “Das Lebende Kreuz. Eine Bildgattung an der Schwelle von Souveränität und Imaginärem,” *Per imaginem: Bildlichkeit und Souveränität*, ed. Anne von der Heiden (Zurich: Diaphanes, 2005), 45–57 (mainly on Hans Fries in whose painting *Ecclesia* is replaced by a tonsured priest, see <http://www.sikart.ch/werke.aspx?id=13101090>).



**Fig. 4:** Ecclesia and Synagoga with the Cross; detail: Synagoga, ca. 1280, Dominican church, Krems, Lower Austria, fresco (© Birgit Wiedl)

are Adam and Eve, committing the original sin.<sup>58</sup> While also existent in other regions such as Northern Italy, the Living Cross went to be particularly successful motif for large-scale frescoes in the Austrian-Bohemian-Moravian countries and the Adriatic region.<sup>59</sup>

The personifications of the triumphant *Ecclesia* and the defeated *Synagoga* flanking a crucifixion scene mark one of the final “stages” of the high medieval rivals, but in their even more vehemently anti-Jewish visual language reflect elements from ritual murder libels and host desecration allegations; Achim Timmerman has suggested to place it more into the context of the anti-heretic propaganda of the 15th century.<sup>60</sup> With chalice, cross-staff, and tetramorph, *Ecclesia* more clearly than ever rests upon the true teachings based on the gospels; and *Synagoga* is more clearly than ever marked as defeated, sinful and despicable – her crown is no longer in the act of slipping off her head but has fallen off completely, while the tablets of the commandments do not appear at all in most renditions, therefore cutting her off entirely from any connections to the (now entirely Christian) Scripture. Her mount is the donkey who is both lazy and obstinate,<sup>61</sup> and she is surrounded by further animals long associated with Jews and the Jewish faith – the goat’s head she holds that was regarded as an icon for lust,<sup>62</sup> and the serpent that sometimes winds around the donkey’s legs stands for the (original) sin.

In some renditions, e.g., in the St. Catherine’s church of the Istrian town of Lindar,<sup>63</sup> *Synagoga* is riding under the flag of the scorpion, the perfidious animal

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**58** Leopold Kretzenbacher, *Wortbegründetes Typologie-Denken auf mittelalterlichen Bildwerken: Zur Ecclesia-Synagoga-Asasel (Sündenbock-)Szenerie unter dem “Lebenden Kreuz” des Thomas von Villach, um 1475* (Munich: Bayerische Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1983), 47. For a photo, see online at: <https://slovakia.travel/en/holy-spirit-church-zehra>.

**59** Achim Timmermann, “The Avenging Crucifix: Some Observations on the Iconographie of the Living Cross,” *Gesta* 40/2 (2001): 141–16; here 144, assumes the origins in northern Italy. Although predominantly appearing in these regions, the motif of the Living Cross is also existent in other areas; see, for example, the early fifteenth-century stained glass windows in St. John’s church of Werben/Elbe (Sachsen-Anhalt); cf. Monika Böning, *Die mittelalterlichen Glasmalereien in der Werbener Johanniskirche* (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag 2006).

**60** Timmermann, “The Avenging Crucifix” (see note 59), 143 and 152–54.

**61** While the *Physiologus* does not mention the donkey, it likens the wild ass to the devil; see Christian Schröder, *Der Millstätter Physiologus. Text, Übersetzung, Kommentar* (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2005), 83–84; Steven A. Epstein, *The Medieval Discovery of Nature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 48.

**62** Weber, “Glaube” (see note 17), 105, with footnote 61. For the interpretation as scapegoat, see Kretzenbacher, *Wortbegründetes Typologie-Denken* (see note 58).

**63** Zdenko Balog, “Živi križ u Lindaru – ikonografsko ikonološka studija,” *Peristil* 51 (2008): 131–48, with illustrations and English summary. Fotos of the fresco from around 1409 can

whose treacherous sting kills from behind and which has been used, for example, in Paolo Uccello's famous predellas on the miracle of the desecrated host to identify the house of the Jew.<sup>64</sup>

The perhaps most important change is the active intervention from Christ himself: the sword that thrusts through her head and chest is held by the hand protruding from the left arm of the cross.<sup>65</sup> She is, however, seldom depicted as completely decapitated – which would stand for a quick and merciful death – but with the sword mostly penetrating multiple parts of her body: her head, her breast and/or chest, her hands and/or arms, so that spectators may witness her continuous punishment.<sup>66</sup>

One of the most impressive examples can be found in St. Andrew's church in the small southern Carinthian town of Thörl-Maglern (see Fig. 5).<sup>67</sup>

In a fresco from around 1475, which covers the entire wall of the western span of the north choir and is attributed to painter Thomas of Villach, scenes from the passion of Christ are depicted in tablets that continue in single columns to the left and right of the Living Cross that forms the elaborate centre-piece. The crucifixion is flanked to the far right (from Christ's perspective) with Mary plucking a fruit from the tree of life; with her other hand, she reaches down to hand a host wafer to a group of faithful led by the pope. This scene is mirrored on the far left with Eve taking the apple from the serpent (whose tail

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also be found here: <http://revitas.org/de/touristische-spaziergange/fresken/pican-gracisce-lindar,5/st-catherine,54.html> and here <https://www.istria-culture.com/en/the-church-of-st-catherine-i16>.

**64** Dana E. Katz, "The Contours of Tolerance: Jews and the Corpus Domini Altarpiece in Urbino," *The Art Bulletin* 85/4 (2003): 646–61; here 648; the predella in question can be found here [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The\\_Miracle\\_of\\_the\\_Desecrated\\_Host#/media/File:Paolo\\_Uccello\\_062.jpg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Miracle_of_the_Desecrated_Host#/media/File:Paolo_Uccello_062.jpg). On scorpions as 'Jewish heraldic animals,' see Higgs Strickland, *Saracens, Demons, & Jews* (see note 50), 176–77, with fig. 85 and pl. 12 (Jews carry banners with the emblems of the dragon and the scorpion in the background of a late fifteenth-century passion scene); ead., "Monsters" (see note 49), 49–54 (on Hieronymus Bosch's scorpion-like creatures and their possible anti-Jewish connotations); Jochum, "Ecclesia" (see note 17), 258.

**65** On the symbolism of the left hand in this context, see Johannes Grabmayer, "Thomas von Villach und das 'Lebende Kreuz' in der Pfarrkirche St. Andreas zu Thörl – kulturhistorische Betrachtungen," *Archivwissen schafft Geschichte: Festschrift für Wilhelm Wadl zum 60. Geburtstag*, ed. Barbara Felsner, Christine Tropper, and Thomas Zeloth (Klagenfurt: Geschichtsverein für Kärnten, 2014), 263–78, here 267.

**66** Timmermann, "The Avenging Crucifix" (see note 59), 148.

**67** For a detailed analysis of the entire fresco see Grabmayer, "Thomas von Villach" (see note 65).





**Fig. 5:** Living Cross, by Thomas of Villach, ca. 1475, St. Andrew's church, Thörl-Maglern, Carinthia/Austria, fresco (© Peter Böttcher, IMAREAL) (with permission)

pierces Eve's heart) and handing a skull to three damned,<sup>68</sup> the headgear and beard of the central one revoking a resemblance to Jews. On the bottom left, the resurrected Christ is leading the redeemed forefathers from the *limbus patrum*, while devils on and around the broken hell-gate fight three archangels who, on the right side, are guarding the gate to Jerusalem; behind them, three women symbolize the three cardinal virtues. In the centre, however, is the crucified Christ

<sup>68</sup> The skull can be read as a representation of Adam; see Grabmayer, "Thomas von Villach" (see note 65), 268.



himself, and his cross with its four arms: the one at the bottom is wielding a hammer against hell's door (which has already broken from its hinges and is lying on the floor), the upper one turns the key in heaven's door. The two side-arms interact with our main protagonists who fulfil all the elements of a classic Living Cross: *dextera coronat* reads the inscription on the banner next to the right arm that places the crown on *Ecclesia's* head who, mounted on the tetramorph and beautifully cloaked, carries, literally, the church (a basilica-type). To the left, *Synagoga*, in a green dress and a tightly bound blindfold, sits on a donkey, with her broken staff in one and the goat's head in the other hand, from whose severed neck blood is still spurting forth. Her own wounds are deep and multiple: the sword the left arm of the cross thrusts through her pierces her twice, or even three times – through her head, through her breast, and, perhaps, into her thigh. Also, the donkey is mortally wounded, not only does it have a gaping wound in its neck, but also multiple deep cuts in both its fore- and hind legs – the spectator can see the shaky, unhealthy, about-to-die ground *Synagoga* is founded on. Yet both rider and mount are still alive (and even the goat's eyes are open), their suffering prolonged, while Eve behind her, in the very act of committing the original sin, underlines yet again *Synagoga's* sinful and depraved disposition.

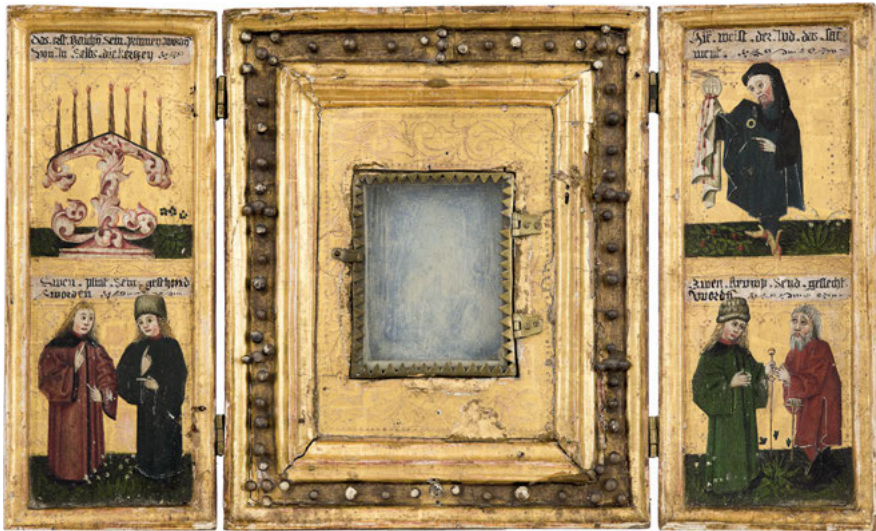
## How to Recognize a Jew, Part II: By What He Does

From the same time period, yet from the opposite end of the spectrum as far as violent imagery is concerned stems my next example: in the Museum of the Monastery of Klosterneuburg near Vienna, a small portable altar from around 1470 (see Fig. 6) is kept that tells the story of a 'host miracle' that happened in the small town of Korneuburg, just across the Danube river, in 1305.<sup>69</sup>

While the Korneuburg host desecration allegation and its fateful consequences are well-documented in contemporary source material,<sup>70</sup> this altar was

<sup>69</sup> Stiftsmuseum Klosterneuburg, GM 50, <https://www.stift-klosterneuburg.at/collection/klappaltaerchen-vom-hostienwunder/>.

<sup>70</sup> Birgit Wiedl, "The Host on the Doorstep: Perpetrators, Victims, and Bystanders in an Alleged Host Desecration in Fourteenth-Century Austria," *Crime and Punishment in the Middle Ages and Early Modern Age. Mental-Historical Investigations of Basic Human Problems and Social Responses*, ed. Albrecht Classen and Connie Scarborough. Fundamentals of Medieval and Early Modern Culture, 11 (Berlin and Boston: Walter de Gruyter, 2012), 299–346; Rubin, *Gentile Tales* (see note 3), 57–65; Winfried Stelzer, "Am Beispiel Korneuburg: Der angebliche Hostienfrevler österreichischer Juden von 1305 und seine Quellen," *Österreich im Mittelalter: Bausteine zu einer revidierten Gesamtdarstellung*, ed. Willibald Rosner. Studien und Forschungen aus dem



**Fig. 6:** Portable altar with reliquary and four panels, ca. 1470; Stiftsmuseum Klosterneuburg, GM 50 (Stiftsmuseum Klosterneuburg) (with permission)

created over a 150 years after the incidents that had led to the murder of all Jewish inhabitants of the town. It had been commissioned to serve as a repository for the ‘new-found’ piece of cloth that had once shrouded the host, by the ‘discovery’ of which the town tried to revive the abating influx of pilgrims to the miraculous host. Three of the four tablets tell the spectator about some of the wonders the host had worked back then – already the citizens’ interrogation minutes from 1305 mention the alighting candles (top left) and the cured crippled (bottom left) and blind (bottom right): these narratives were obviously still around. The tablet in the top right corner is however not dedicated to the miracles the host performed, but to its emergence: a male black-clad figure is shown who differs from the other individuals neither in his clothing<sup>71</sup> nor in the

Niederösterreichischen Institut für Landeskunde, 26. Niederösterreichische Schriften, 109, Wissenschaft (St. Pölten: NÖ Institut für Landeskunde, 1999), 309–48. The cultural aspect of visual memoria in the form of pilgrimage sites of miraculous hosts has been elaborated on by Mitchell B. Merback, *Pilgrimage and Pogrom: Violence, Memory and Visual Culture at the Host-Miracle Shrines of Germany and Austria* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2013); on Korneuburg see 72–78, 129, 177.

<sup>71</sup> It is important to stress that the actual everyday clothes of Jews and Christians did not differ; see Elisheva Baumgarten, *Practicing Piety in Medieval Ashkenaz: Men, Women, and Everyday*

backdrop he is set against – he stand before the same gilded panel and on the same painted meadow – yet he is immediately recognizable as a Jew for two reasons: firstly, on his cloak, the yellow badge can be seen, a discriminating identifier that had been common in western European regal and territorial legislation<sup>72</sup> yet had only a few decades earlier been (re-)introduced into the territories of the Holy Roman Empire<sup>73</sup>; this altar tablet marks, to my knowledge, its first appearance in the Duchy of Austria.<sup>74</sup> Its significance as an indicator for a Jewish person however must have been already established, since both artist and client relied upon the audience being able to read the code. In fact, it appears in several anti-Jewish illustrations from around the same time. The woodcuts for example that helped spread the narrative of the alleged host desecration of Passau (1477/78) showed their Jewish protagonists marked with the badge as well, if only in those scenes where they act among Christians, as if to counteract any attempts of the Jews to disguise themselves.<sup>75</sup>

Secondly, and even more importantly, the figure in the Korneuburg altar piece is recognizable as a Jew by what he does, or has done: in his right hand, a host wafer can be seen. The cross in its middle signals its consecrated status; depictions of (miraculous) host wafers with images of the cross or Christ's face on them were among the visual tropes used to help onlookers understand consecration and the Eucharist and often appeared in context with allegations of

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*Religious Observance* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014), 172–94, for a detailed study of the Jews' appearances in a particular manuscript see Reitingner and Soukup, "The Krumlov Liber Depictus" (see note 36).

**72** The first explicit mention of a yellow badge (*rota de feltro vel panno croceo*) is Louis IX's ordinance of 1269 for the Jews of France, see Heinz Schreckenberg, *Die Adversus-Judaeos-Texte und ihr literarisches und historisches Umfeld (13.-20. Jh.)*. Europäische Hochschulschriften Reihe XXIII Theologie, 497 (Frankfurt a. M., Berlin, et al.: Peter Lang, 1994), 245.

**73** With the exception of a (presumable) mention in Erfurt in 1294 (see *Germania Judaica II: Von 1238 bis zur Mitte des 14. Jahrhunderts*, 1. Halbband, ed. Zvi Avneri [Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1968], 216), the yellow badge appears only in the early fifteenth century (e.g., the imperial decree for Augsburg 1434; see *Germania Judaica III: 1350–1519*, 1. Halbband, ed. Arye Maimon [Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1987], 43).

**74** The (presumably few) Jews living in the Duchy of Austria were ordered to wear the yellow badge by mandate of Emperor Ferdinand I in 1551 (<https://oe99.staatsarchiv.at/16-jh/der-gelbe-ring-zur-kennzeichnungspflicht-fuer-juden/#c1649>).

**75** [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Host\\_desecration#/media/File:Host\\_desecration1.jpg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Host_desecration#/media/File:Host_desecration1.jpg). In the torture and execution scenes, the Jews either wear the Jewish hat or have no distinguishing mark at all. On the Passau alleged host desecration, see also W. M. Schmid, "Zur Geschichte der Juden in Passau," *Zeitschrift für die Geschichte der Juden in Deutschland* 2 (1929/1930): 119–35.

(not necessarily Jewish) host desecration.<sup>76</sup> The desecration of the host by the Jew is obvious: three lines of blood – and according to the minutes from 1305, the witnesses testified to seeing three thick drops of blood – well from the host wafer and trickle down the cloth that covers the Jew's right hand. With his left, he points toward the cloth, the (allegedly) same cloth that was physically present in the altar and presented to pilgrims (and was in fact kept in the reliquary until 1805). The way the Jew holds the host resembles processions at the Feast of Corpus Christ where the host was publicly presented to the masses, which served as another tool in giving the populace a better understanding of the Eucharist; the Jew presenting the host in this way can be interpreted as a further element of anti-Jewish narratives: the wrongful imitation of Christian rites by Jews, who either out of spite or out of inability fail to show correct behaviour (e.g., the inability to swallow host wafers) and thus, by their own perverseness, allow Christ himself to expose them and further strengthen Christian identity via the common enemy.

This sense of community, of common identity, is also reflected on how the Jew is identified: *der Jud*, 'the Jew,' the inscription above his head reads: *hier weist der Jud das Sacrament* – 'here the Jew shows the sacrament'), and while the identity of the two Jews immediately involved in the (fraudulent) discovery of the host in 1305 is known,<sup>77</sup> no mention is made here: the depicted Jew is both a specific Jewish person and 'the Jew,' the archetype, his guilt is individual and even personal, and yet, at the same time, collective.<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> See, for example, the depiction and narrative of the miraculous host Pope Eugen IV gifted to Duke Philip of Burgundy in the Horarium Mary's of Burgundy from around 1470/80, ÖNB Cod. 1857, fol. 1\*v–2\*r <http://data.onb.ac.at/rep/100B8410> (last folia of the manuscript).

<sup>77</sup> The blood-stained host, that had been placed on the doorstep of (presumably only) Jewish house, was discovered by the Jewish *scholasticus* (most likely a schoolteacher, not a rabbi), and while he tried to convince the Christian bystanders to take the host from him, the houseowner, Zerkel, ran after the person he suspected of having dropped the host there. In later retellings of the story, his name as well as the *scholasticus* reappear, so it is quite likely that these names were still part of the narrative at the time of the altar's creation, its anonymised wording therefore was probably chosen deliberately, see Wiedl, "Host on the Doorstep" (see note 70), 330–32.

<sup>78</sup> Friedrich Lotter, "Hostienfrevelvorwurf und Blutwunderfälschung bei den Judenverfolgungen von 1298 ("Rintfleisch") und 1336–1338 ("Armleder")," *Fälschungen im Mittelalter*, ed. Detlef Jasper. MGH Schriften, 33. Vol. 5: *Fingierte Briefe, Frömmigkeit und Fälschung, Realienfälschungen* (Hanover: Hahnsche Buchhandlung, 1988), 533–83, points out that while host desecration legends about Christians maltreating hosts existed parallel to those about Jews, the Christian perpetrators were still regarded as redeemable and as individuals.

## Jews and Animals

Animals play a major role in medieval fantasies.<sup>79</sup> Among their many fields of application, animals could stand for individuals or groups of people whose characteristics they represented. While some animals were attributed (almost) exclusively positive or negative characteristics or were even seen as personifications of Christ,<sup>80</sup> most animals could, and would be used for a variety of meanings, depending on the context. Animals became more and more humanized in the course of the twelfth century, while the ‘beast within’ was being recognised in humans; in theological literature, animal behaviour was utilized to convey moral lessons and point out desired Christian conduct, while animals whose behaviour was deemed irrational and ‘against nature’ offered a negative foil for Christians.<sup>81</sup> The usage of animal imagery as a tool in polemical contexts was therefore abundant, and animals considered particularly nasty, dangerous, or *contra naturam* often had to stand for more than one ostracised group. Furthermore, many animals were ambivalent in their interpretation and could represent negative and positive attributes depending on the context.

The use of animals, real or fictitious, and animal-human hybrids as a means of degradation and ridicule was not singular to Christian polemics.<sup>82</sup> Jews, Christians, and Muslims alike used the image of the dog as a symbol of religious impurity as an insult for the respective other,<sup>83</sup> yet early on, Christian

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<sup>79</sup> Research on the medieval perception of animals is vast and can not be dealt with here; for overviews, see Peter Dinzelbacher, “Mensch und Tier in der Geschichte Europas: Mittelalter” *Mensch und Tier in der Geschichte Europas*, ed. id. (Stuttgart: Alfred Kröner Verlag, 2000), 181–292; *Animaltown: Beasts in Medieval Urban Space*, ed. Alice M. Choyke and Gerhard Jaritz. British Archaeological Reports International Series 2858 (Oxford: BAR, 2017). On bestiaries, see the contribution of Jean Beal in this volume; further Debra Hassig, *Medieval Bestiaries: Text, Image, Ideology* (Cambridge, New York, and Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 1995); for an overview of (not only) anti-Jewish iconography in manuscripts, see Higgs Strickland, *Saracens, Demons, & Jews* (see note 50).

<sup>80</sup> See the contribution by Jane Beal in this volume.

<sup>81</sup> Debra Higgs Strickland, “The Jews, Leviticus, and the Unclean in Medieval English Bestiaries,” *Beyond the Yellow Badge* (see note 49), 203–32; here 203. See also Joyce E. Salisbury, *The Beast Within: Animals in the Middle Ages* (New York: Routledge, 1994), and Epstein, *Discovery of Nature* (see note 61).

<sup>82</sup> See, e.g., David I. Shyovitz, “Beauty and the Bestiary. Animals, Wonder, and Polemic in Medieval Achkenaz,” *The Jewish-Christian Encounter in Medieval Preaching*, ed. Jonathan Adams and Jussi Hanska. Routledge Research in Medieval Studies, 6 (New York and London: Routledge, 2015), 215–39.

<sup>83</sup> Ivan G. Marcus, “Images of the Jews in the Exempla of Caesarius of Heisterbach,” *From Witness to Witchcraft: Jews and Judaism in Medieval Christian Thought*, ed. Jeremy Cohen.

ideas of analogies of canine behaviour and Jewish customs made it a model animal for anti-Jewish fantasies.<sup>84</sup> Like pigs, dogs represented greed and gluttony, since they would return to consume their own vomit (Proverbs 26:11, repeated in 2 Peter 2:22), which was also read as a metaphor for the Jews' stubbornness and obstinacy. Peter the Venerable described the Jews attacking Jesus like a pack of dogs.<sup>85</sup> Jewish voices and the Hebrew language were frequently likened to a dog's bark; fifteenth-century German author Michael Beheim, among others, pretended to hear "wailing, hellish cries, and dogs' barks" from the synagogue.<sup>86</sup> In an (unusually harsh) verdict, the episcopal bailiff of Paris condemned a baptized Jew to be burned at the stake on grounds of (among other accusations) his relations with a Jewish woman which he equated to sexual relations with a dog (*rem habere cum Judea est rem habere cum cane*),<sup>87</sup> and the image of dogs being executed alongside Jews (and Christians), mostly hung upside-down, was employed as a specific stigma and a particularly cruel execution style, since the terrified dogs would snap at the Jews hanging next to

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Wolfenbütteler Mittelalter Studien, 11 (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1996), 247–55, here 250–51; Cuffel, *Gendering Disgust* (see note 8), 216; Marc Michael Epstein, "Bestial Bodies on the Jewish Margins: Race, Ethnicity, and Otherness in Medieval Manuscripts Illuminated for Jews," *Monsters and Monstrosity* (see note 49), 69–85, particularly on "the appropriation of anti-Jewish imagery and its reformation as anti-Gentile caricature" (75).

**84** Kenneth Stow, *Jewish Dogs: An Image and Its Interpreters. Continuity in the Catholic-Jewish Encounter*. Stanford Studies in Jewish History and Culture (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2006); Winfried Frey, "'Woelt Gott man hing sie wie die Hund.' Vergleiche von Juden mit Hunden in deutschen Texten des Mittelalters und der frühen Neuzeit," *Das Mittelalter: Perspektiven mediävistischer Forschung*, vol. 12, part 2: *Tier und Religion*, ed. Thomas Honegger and W. Günther Rohr (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 2007), 119–34, also stresses the usage of dogs in both Christian and Jewish polemical literature.

**85** Irven M. Resnick, "Good Dog/Bad Dog: Dogs in Medieval Religious Polemics," *Enarratio: Publications of the Medieval Association of the Midwest* 18 (2013): 70–97, here 71–72.

**86** Heil, "*Gottesfeinde*" (see note 9), 113; Wiedl, "Anti-Jewish Polemics" (see note 38), 72.

**87** The verdict has in older literature been attributed to Johannes Gallus who had in fact argued against the harsh judgement (*rem habere cum Judea est rem habere cum muliere a Deo creata*), see Norbert Schnitzler, "*Contra naturam* – Sexuelle Devianz und christlich-jüdische Koexistenz im Mittelalter," *Wechselseitige Wahrnehmung der Religionen im Spätmittelalter und in der Frühen Neuzeit*, Teil 1, ed. Ludger Grenzmann, Thomas Haye, Nikolaus Henkel, and Thomas Kaufmann, *Abhandlungen der Akademie zu Göttingen, Neue Folge* 4 (Berlin, New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2009), 251–81, here 259, with footnote 25; see also Rosa Alvarez Perez, "Next-Door Neighbors: Aspects of Judeo-Christian Cohabitation in Medieval France," *Urban Space in the Middle Ages and the Early Modern Age*, ed. Albrecht Classen and Marilyn Sandidge. *Fundamentals of Medieval and Early Modern Culture*, 4 (Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2009), 309–30; here 325.

them.<sup>88</sup> However, dogs could also represent desirable characteristics such as loyalty, and could even stand for Christians themselves<sup>89</sup>: as hunters of the hare they would turn into the Christian persecutor of the 'Jewish' animal.<sup>90</sup> Hares and rabbits, while also assigned positive attributes and generally one of the most-used animals in (not only) medieval art, were thought to be of a promiscuous and lascivious nature and thus illustrated the Jews' sexual deviance,<sup>91</sup> as did the weasel (that copulated orally),<sup>92</sup> the goat and the hyena. The latter offered a particularly broad spectrum of anti-Jewish interpretation.<sup>93</sup> Already classical-antique authors such as Aristotle, Ovid, and Pliny the Elder as well as early Christian authors like Clement of Alexandria focussed on the hyena's many failings<sup>94</sup>: its hermaphroditic nature<sup>95</sup> (a misinterpretation of the specie's protruding female genitalia), its habit to dig up corpses and feed on

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**88** Frey, "Woelt Gott" (see note 84); Resnick, "Good Dog" (see note 85), 72–73; Norbert Schnitzler, "Juden vor Gericht. Soziale Ausgrenzung durch Sanktionen," *Herrschaftliches Strafen seit dem Hochmittelalter*, ed. Hans Schlosser, Rolf Sprandel, and Dietmar Willoweit. Konflikt, Verbrechen und Sanktion in der Gesellschaft Alteuropas, Symposien und Synthesen 5 (Cologne, Vienna, and Weimar: Böhlau 2002), 285–308; here 293 and 302–03, on the positive image of the sleeping dog, 303.

**89** Most famous for this association are the Dominicans who stylized themselves as 'watch-dogs of the lord' (*domini canes*); Resnick, *Marks of Distinction* (see note 7), 148.

**90** Marc Michael Epstein has interpreted the frequent appearance of hares (an unkosher animal) in medieval Jewish manuscripts as a deliberate, topsy-turvy use of the Christian polemical image, and emphasises that the hares' traits which allow them to being adept at surviving would appeal to minorities, see id., *Dreams of Subversion in Medieval Jewish Art and Literature* (University Park, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1997), chapter 2: The Elusive Hare, 17–38, particularly 27. Hares subjecting dogs can be seen in the fourteenth-century Barcelona Haggada, British Library, Add. Ms. 14761, fol. 26v, <https://www.bl.uk/catalogues/illuminatedmanuscripts/ILLUMIN.ASP?Size=mid&IllID=52735>, and 30v, <https://www.bl.uk/catalogues/illuminatedmanuscripts/ILLUMIN.ASP?Size=mid&IllID=49342>; on these images in particular, see Epstein, *Dreams*, 30 and id., "Bestial Bodies" (see note 83), 72–73.

**91** Higgs Strickland, *Saracens, Demons, & Jews* (see note 50), 137; Resnick, *Marks of Distinction* (see note 7), 167; Shyovitz, "Beauty" (see note 82), 230; Wiedl, "Laughing at the Beast" (see note 33), 330 and 332.

**92** Shyovitz, "Beauty" (see note 82), 230.

**93** On the hyena's general bad reputation, see Stephen E. Glickman, "The Spotted Hyena from Aristotle to the Lion King: Reputation is Everything," *Social Research* 62/63: *In the Company of Animals* (1995): 501–37.

**94** Glickman, "Spotted Hyena" (see note 93), 508; Sian Lewis, Lloyd Llenwellyn-Jones, *The Culture of Animals in Antiquity: A Sourcebook with Commentaries* (Abington and New York: Routledge, 2018), lemma 'hyena.'

**95** This was also a characteristic of hares and rabbits who were thought to change their gender on a monthly basis; this Christian fantasy was reflected in a thirteenth-century Pietist text (*Sefer Gematryot*) whose author used the gender-switch to explain the grammatical

them, its obsession with sexual intercourse and the associated deviance as well as its general cruel nature; the accumulated bad reputation led the anonymous author of the *Physiologus* to identify it with the Biblical brute of Leviticus and Jeremiah.<sup>96</sup>

While the hyena served as a foil for many wrongdoers,<sup>97</sup> many of its perceived characteristics fitted the Christian fantasies about Jews like a glove: hyenas imitated the human voice just like the Jews themselves feigned humanity, and, if successful, lured Christians into their doom. The hyena's ability to change from male to female led to the equation with the Jews' sexual depravity and the idea of the menstruating Jewish male; the double-mindedness, and, combined with its ravenous nature, greed-driven idolatry: [following the description of the hyena's two sexes] "akin to this animal are the children of Israel: at first, they worshipped the sublime God, but later, driven by greed and whoredom, they worshipped the idols. The hyena means greed: who still adores the idols of this sinful world," the *Physiologus* of Millstatt from around 1200 states.<sup>98</sup> Feeding on corpses,<sup>99</sup> hyenas tied in with Christian fantasies of Jewish cannibalistic proclivities that became a core element of ritual murder accusations.<sup>100</sup>

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inconsistency in Leviticus and Deuteronomy that refer to the rabbit using male and female gender, Shyovitz, "Beauty" (see note 82), 230–31.

**96** Glickman, "Spotted Hyena" (see note 93), 515–16.

**97** In his sermons, Anthony of Padua gave the hyena a particularly bad reputation; he connects the stories of hyenas being able to imitate the human voice and are maneaters: they call out in a human voice during the night to attract men they then devour; he also equated the hyena with hypocrites. For homosexuality, see, e.g., Emil Peters, *Der griechische Physiologus und seine orientalischen Übersetzungen* (Berlin: S. Calvary, 1898), 22 ("don't resemble the hyena who is scolded by the holy apostle who said: men fornicate with men" [Romans 1,27])

**98** "Dem tiere gelich sint diu israheliscen chint. si betteten ze erist an got herist. dar nach durch glust unde durch huor uoboten si dei apgotir. diu Hina die gir bezeichinot, swer noch uobet dirre werlde apgot." See Schröder, *Der Millstätter Physiologus* (see note 61), 82–85. The (still) best overview over the numerous variations of the *Physiologus* is Nikolaus Henkel, *Studien zum Physiologus im Mittelalter*. Hermaea. Germanistische Forschungen, Neue Folge, 38 (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer, 1976; rpt. Berlin and Boston: Walter de Gruyter, 2013), Schröder, *Millstätter Physiologus*, 346–59, offers an updates list of the versions. In context with anti-Jewish polemics, see also Drake, *Slandering the Jew* (see note 8), 135.

**99** Two examples from British bestiaries from around 1200: British Library, Royal MS 12 C xix, fol. 11v, [http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/Viewer.aspx?ref=royal\\_ms\\_12\\_c\\_xix\\_f011v](http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/Viewer.aspx?ref=royal_ms_12_c_xix_f011v), and Aberdeen University Library MS 24, fol. 11v, <https://www.abdn.ac.uk/bestiary/ms24/f11v?ref=11v>, see also Glickman, "Spotted Hyena" (see note 93), 516–18, Shyovitz, "Beauty" (see note 82), 228.

**100** Resnick, *Marks of Distinction* (see note 7), 50–51, Hassig, *Medieval Bestiaries* (see note 79), 145–55, 174; Higgs Strickland, *Saracens, Demons, & Jews* (see note 50), 147–48, 153–54; on the connection of blood libels and cannibalism, see Gavin I. Langmuir, *Toward a Definition of*



Like the hyena, the venomous scorpion and the mythical mantichore fell into the category of dangerous and destructive beasts, and the anti-Jewish context they appear in emphasizes these aspects: the scorpion serves as a heraldic animal of the dying *Synagoga* of the Living Cross, while a Jew-mantichore hybrid, with caricature-like features, a phrygian cap and a red beard, can be found in the same bestiary that houses the corpse-feeding hyena.<sup>101</sup> The Jew-beast's un-human monstrosity is summed up in the illustration of a mid-twelfth-century bestiary that shows the hybrid again with grotesque profile, phrygian hat and red(dish) beard, while chewing on a human leg he has between his teeth, leaving no doubt about the cannibalistic allegations.<sup>102</sup> Other animals were more difficult to decipher: the owl's nocturnal nature with its preference of darkness over light stood for the Jews' obstinate refusal of the light of Christ,<sup>103</sup> having righteous Christians rebel against the wicked Jew in the form of smaller birds while the owl-Jew remains stoic, persevering in his wrongs. Lest the spectator miss the connection, a more visible insult was sometimes added by given depictions of owls 'Jewish features' by turning its beak into the likeness of a hooked nose, such as in the *Harley Bestiary* from 1230/40.<sup>104</sup>

Yet, even owls and manticores with 'Jewish features' required a certain knowledge of the *Physiologus* and theological understanding to decipher the implicit accusation of obstinacy, cannibalism, and blood magic. The perhaps most vicious anti-Jewish depiction that embodied Jewish un-humanness like no

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*Antisemitism*. Sec. rev. edition (1990; Berkeley, Los Angeles, CA, and Oxford: University of California Press, 1996), 263–81.

**101** British Library, Royal 12 C xix, fol. 29v, [http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/Viewer.aspx?ref=royal\\_ms\\_12\\_c\\_xix\\_f029v](http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/Viewer.aspx?ref=royal_ms_12_c_xix_f029v).

**102** Bodleian Library, MS. Bodley 764, Folio 25r, a depiction here: <http://bestiary.ca/beasts/beastgallery177.htm#>; Higgs Strickland, *Saracens, Demons, & Jews* (see note 50), 136, on the beard 77, and fig. 60 and pl. 3; ead., "Monsters" (see note 49), 54; also Lipton, *Dark Mirror* (see note 36), 49–50; on grotesque-features figures representing Jews in Jewish manuscripts, see Epstein, "Bestial Bodies" (see note 49), 75–76.

**103** Mariko Miyazaki, "Misericord Owls and Medieval Anti-Semitism," *The Mark of the Beast: The Medieval Bestiary in Art, Life, and Literature*, ed. Debra Hassig. Garland Reference Library of the Humanities, 2076 (New York: Garland, 1999), 23–52. This association was utilized again in anti-Puritan polemics in seventeenth-century England, continuing a negative iconography that remained unchanged regardless of the fact that the ongoing revival of antique period brought an estimate of the 'wise owl,' see Brett D. Hirsch, "From Jew to Puritan. The Emblematic Owl in Early English Culture," *'This Earthly Stage.' World and Stage in Late Medieval and Early Modern England*, ed. id. and Christopher Wortham. *Cursor Mundi*, 13 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2010), 131–71.

**104** British Library, Harley MS 4751, fol. 47r., [http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/Viewer.aspx?ref=harley\\_ms\\_4751\\_f047r](http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/Viewer.aspx?ref=harley_ms_4751_f047r).

other, left nothing to chance: the *Judensau*.<sup>105</sup> Being based on various theological motifs – the biblical sow which, according to St. Peter, returns to wallowing in the mire after having being washed (just as converted Jews would return to their faith), the connection of pigs with impurity, heresy and the deadly sins of gluttony and lust<sup>106</sup> – the *Judensau* is perhaps the ultimate example of the Jewish human-beast: by suckling on the sow's teats, the Jews reveal their non-human descent, and their unnatural fondling of the sow's behind, their devouring of its excrements<sup>107</sup> further emphasized their own beastliness and evoked both disgust and mockery. It does not come as a surprise that this image, which is immediately understandable without any prior knowledge, became the perhaps most successful of all anti-Jewish images. Having moved from the exclusivity of cloisters and high-up-the-wall church interiors to the outside of churches already in the fourteenth century, the *Judensau* proceeded to secular buildings such as town halls and, finally, to private homes: the once rather sophisticated (yet no less cruel) witticism had turned into a broad joke that was accessible to everyone who happened to pass by, including the Jews who were thus doubly exposed to ridicule and aversion of their Christian neighbors.

With the emergence of woodcuts and broadsheets, renditions of the *Judensau* were not only among the most frequently published anti-Jewish images but reflected back to the connection of Jew-beast hybrids with accusations of ritual murder/cannibalism: the most popular of the *Judensau* woodcut images were modelled after the painting of Frankfurt's public passage in the *Alten Brückenturm*. This exceptionally obscene rendition was, following the presentation on the Frankfurt bridge tower, depicted together with the child-martyr Simon whose alleged ritual murder by the Jews of Trent in 1475 had triggered anti-Jewish propaganda campaigns of hitherto unseen proportions.<sup>108</sup> Unlike many of the high

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**105** Isaiah Shachar, *The Judensau: A Medieval Anti-Jewish Motif and its History*. Warburg Institute Surveys, 5 (London: Warburg Institute, 1974); Wiedl, "Laughing at the Beast" (see note 33), 325–64; for an ethno-anthropological view, see Claudine Fabre-Vassas, *The Singular Beast. Jews, Christians, & the Pig*, trans. from the French by Carol Volk. Sec. ed. European Perspectives (1994; New York: Columbia University Press, 1999). For current debates and legal struggles concerning the relevant sculptures today, see Albrecht Classen's remark in the Introduction to this volume.

**106** Resnick, *Marks of Distinction* (see note 7), 149.

**107** Resnick, *Marks of Distinction* (see note 7), 170.

**108** Christine Magin and Falk Eisermann, "'Ettwas zu sagen von den iuden.' Themen und Formen antijüdischer Einblattdrucke im späten 15. Jahrhundert," *Frömmigkeit – Theologie – Frömmigkeitstheologie. Contributions to European Church History. Festschrift für Berndt Hamm zum 60. Geburtstag*, ed. Gudrun Litz, Heidrun Munzert, and Roland Liebenberg. Studies in the History of Christian Traditions, 124 (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2005), 173–93, here 180, Wolfgang

medieval anti-Jewish illustrations that demanded a certain knowledge and understanding, the *Judensau*'s cruel and obscene characteristics and its no longer merely hinted-at connection with Jewish ritual murder represented maybe the lowest of all thresholds: everyone, theologically savvy or not, literate or not, got it.<sup>109</sup> Broadsheets and leaflets, mass-produced and inexpensive, marked the end of 'stationary' anti-Jewish propaganda such as church paintings and statues: proofs of the Jews' turpitude and vileness could be taken home, spread among the neighbours, and laughed at together as often as desired.<sup>110</sup>

Older legends and stories no longer served the purpose of spreading the narrative but were considered evidence of the historic veracity of the Jews' perfidy,<sup>111</sup> as much as the pilgrims that went to visit the portable altar at Korneuburg no longer required any proof of the host's miraculous power or the Jews' crimes – the desire to see the host, the cloth, and the Jewish malcreant was the expression of their rightful faith and the ultimate reward. At the same time, both the *Judensau* and the *Synagoga* made their appearances on stage, namely in Shrovetide Plays that often encompassed the entire town as their stage – enabling the Christians to (re-)connect the abstract, archetypal Jew with their 'real' Jewish neighbors.

## Conclusion

Fantasy and imagination, carried into the real life, had real-life consequences. The connection of archetypal anti-Jewish fantasies – Jews as opponents to Christianity, of Killers of Christ, desecrators of hosts and ritual murderers of Christian children, as well-poisoners and usurers, and plotters of a world-wide conspiracy – and 'real' Jews, the connection of interchangeable and immediately recognizable narrative patterns that span from England to France to Germany to Bohemia and Poland with local events and names proved

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Treue, *Der Trienter Judenprozeß: Voraussetzungen – Abläufe – Auswirkungen (1475–1588)*. Forschungen zur Geschichte der Juden, Abteilung A: Abhandlungen, 4 (Hanover: Hahnsche Buchhandlung, 1996), 521, who states that the (alleged) murder and (real) trial provoked and unrivalled number of printings to circulate.

**109** Wiedl, "Laughing at the Beast" (see note 33), 333–34.

**110** Wiedl, "Laughing at the Beast" (see note 33), 342.

**111** Christoph Cluse, "Blut ist im Schuh: Ein Exempel zur Judenverfolgung des 'Rex Armleder'," *Liber amicorum necnon et amicarum für Alfred Heit: Beiträge zur mittelalterlichen Geschichte und geschichtlichen Landeskunde*, ed. Friedhelm Burgard, Christoph Cluse, and Alfred Haverkamp. Trierer Historische Forschungen, 28 (Trier: Kliemedien, 1996), 371–92, here 375.

particularly fateful. Initially, anti-Jewish stereotypes might have been used by ecclesiastical authorities to primarily convey Christian theological thinking as well as teach and emphasize desired Christian behavior, yet once these anti-Jewish fantasies had been engrained into the common Christian mindset by both narratives and visual representations, the Christian population would show automatic, violent reactions if triggered by a minor part, or even a mere suggestion of the narrative. In return, these narratives were frequently utilized by (both ecclesiastical and secular) authorities who relied on both the credibility of the story and the reaction of its audience.<sup>112</sup> The narrative and visual aids made the populace see that Jewish crime was indeed real, actual, local reality – such as the host desecrations that took place in the Lower Austrian towns of Korneuburg and Pulkau in 1305 and 1338 respectively and that, over the following centuries, created (not particularly successful) pilgrimage sites.<sup>113</sup> The real, actual Jews, had by then long been murdered.<sup>114</sup>

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**112** Many late medieval expulsion decrees give a list of the ‘Jewish crimes’ as a reason for the Jews’ fate; e.g., the expulsion mandates of Emperor Maximilian I for the duchies of Styria and Carinthia, see Stephan Laux, “Dem König eine ‘ergetzlichkeit’. Die Vertreibung der Juden aus der Steiermark (1496/97),” *Jüdisches Leben in der Steiermark. Marginalisierung, Auslöschung, Annäherung*, ed. Gerald Lamprecht (Innsbruck, Vienna, and Bolzano: StudienVerlag, 2004), 33–57, here 41. For the connection of blood libels with the expulsion of Jews, see Wenninger, “Die Instrumentalisierung von Ritualmordbeschuldigungen” (see note 13), 208–10, who emphasizes the impact these legends on the steady increase of a general anti-Jewish stance within the Christian population, even if immediate connections can only be traced in a few cases.

**113** Merback, *Pilgrimage and Pogrom* (see note 71) *passim*.

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Jane Beal

# The Life of Christ in Medieval Bestiaries: Imagining the Griffin, Lion, Unicorn, Pelican, and Phoenix

In the final cantos of the *Purgatorio*, Dante encounters a Griffin, a mythical creature with the body of a lion and the head and wings of an eagle. The Griffin's wings reach up so high that their tips cannot be seen in the sky; the Griffin's limbs are golden, and the rest of it is white mixed with brilliant red.<sup>1</sup> Dante tells us that the Griffin is "solo una persona in due nature" ("one sole person in two natures")<sup>2</sup> that is, Christ. Beatrice, Dante's beloved and guide at this point in his otherworldly journey, stands close to the Griffin, looking into his eyes, and as Dante looks into her eyes, he sees the Griffin reflected there:

Como in lo specchio sol, non altrimenti / la doppia fiera dentro vi raggiava, / or con altri,  
or con altri reggimenti. / Pensa, lettor, s'io mi maravigliava, / quando vedea la cosa in sè  
star queta, / e nell' idolo suo si trasmuta.

[The dual-natured creature was reflected in them, just like the sun in the mirror, with attributes now of the human, now the divine. Reader, think how I marveled, in my mind, to see the thing itself remain unmoving, and yet its image changing.]<sup>3</sup>

The Griffin later approaches the mystic tree, which is a figure of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. The Griffin drags a pole to the foot of this Tree, and then leaves: "e quell di lei a lei lascio legato."<sup>4</sup> This pole is Christ's Cross, and the Griffin, bound to it, is Christ Crucified.

Within the setting of the Earthly Paradise on the top of the purgatorial mount, Dante has carefully elaborated upon the allegorical significance of the Griffin,

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<sup>1</sup> Canto XXIX, lines 106–114 cited from the dual-language edition, with facing-page Italian and literal English translation, of Dante Alighieri, *The Divine Comedy 2: Purgatorio*, Canto XXIX, ed. and trans. John D. Sinclair, rpt. (1939; Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1961), 382–83. All subsequent Italian quotations are taken from Sinclair's edition.

<sup>2</sup> Canto XXXI, lines 80–81. For a complete, easily accessible English translation, illustrated with Gustav Doré's illustrations, Dante, *Purgatorio*, trans. A. S. Kline. Available at [https://www.poetryintranslation.com/PITBR/Italian/DantPurg29to33.php#anchor\\_Toc64099735](https://www.poetryintranslation.com/PITBR/Italian/DantPurg29to33.php#anchor_Toc64099735) (last accessed on Nov. 5, 2019).

<sup>3</sup> *Purgatorio*, Canto XXXI, lines 121–26, trans. Kline (see note 2).

<sup>4</sup> *Purgatorio*, Canto XXXII, line 51.

which for him stands for Christ, who is both fully human and fully divine. The lion stands for Christ's humanity, and the eagle for His divinity, while his colors – gold, white, and blood-red – stand for his royalty, purity, and atoning sacrifice. Dante's vision of the Griffin in Beatrice's eyes suggests how powerfully his human beloved draws him to the love of Christ. Christ's reflection in her eyes is "just like the sun in a mirror"<sup>5</sup>: dazzlingly bright. That he sees the image of the Griffin in her eyes as alternately the lion and the eagle, yet the Griffin himself unmoving, suggests how radiantly Beatrice's eyes show the humanity and divinity of Christ to Dante. As Dante continues to meditate on the significance of the Griffin, he sees the Griffin taking symbolic action to redeem the Fall of humankind (which is recalled through the figure of the mystic tree), and conquer sin and death through His own sacrifice when He is bound to the pole that represents the Cross.

As Beryl Rowland has observed, Dante's interpretation of the Griffin differs from the traditional understanding of this animal's symbolism in the Middle Ages, when griffins were more often seen as figures for the devil than for Christ.<sup>6</sup> Yet Dante did not invent his glorious vision out of whole cloth; he drew on precedent. As Louis Charbonneau-Lassay notes, the Griffin sometimes stood for Christ in bestiaries.<sup>7</sup> This ability to find opposite meanings in the same image was wide-spread in the Middle Ages, taking its inspiration from the parables of Jesus in the New Testament, in which leaven (that is, yeast) could stand for either the hypocrisy of the Pharisees or the kingdom of heaven, and from the Bible generally, in which a lion could be compared to the devil or Christ himself, "the Lion of Judah."<sup>8</sup> Different traditions of interpretation of beast images existed in different contexts, like sculpture or vice-and-virtue cycles, and within the bestiaries themselves – often side-by-side in the same commentary on the image of a beast in any given manuscript.

In *Purgatorio*, Dante stands as an extraordinary, even exemplary reader, modeling a Christian spiritual practice that was very common in the later

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<sup>5</sup> *Purgatorio*, Canto XXXI, line 121, trans. Kline.

<sup>6</sup> Beryl Rowland, *Animals with Human Faces: A Guide to Animal Symbolism* (Knoxville, TN: The University of Tennessee Press, 1973), 87. She observes, "In medieval sculpture, the griffin frequently symbolized the Devil, probably on account of its fabled ability to carry off animals and people at one swoop of its talons." But she adds that in the medieval cycles of virtues and vices, the griffin was often portrayed as the "emblem of Scientia or Knowledge" (87).

<sup>7</sup> Louis Charbonneau-Lassay, *The Bestiary of Christ, with Woodcuts by the Author*, trans. and abridged by D. M. Dooling (1940; New York: Penguin/Arkana, A Parabola Book, 1991, 1992), 397–409.

<sup>8</sup> On the leaven as hypocrisy, see Matt. 6:16; as the kingdom of heaven, see Matt. 13:33 and Luke 13:20–21. As the adversary, the devil, who roams around seeking whom he may devour, see 1 Peter 5:8; as the Lion of Judah, see Rev. 5:5 (cf. Genesis 49:9).

Middle Ages: looking at the images of beasts, and imagining not only their natural characteristics, which were described in bestiaries according to knowledge inherited from Aristotle and Pliny (among others), but also their spiritual significance.<sup>9</sup> Especially between the twelfth and fourteenth centuries (a time frame that includes the years when Dante wrote the *Commedia* in 1308–1320 C.E.), medieval writers and readers of bestiaries were meditating on many other animals – both real and mythical – that they, too, viewed as representing Christ and key moments from his life. Among these animals were the lion, unicorn, pelican, and phoenix, beasts which had characteristics that were associated with Christ's Incarnation, Crucifixion, and Resurrection.<sup>10</sup>

The development of the medieval bestiary genre, and the specific *mise-en-page* of the bestiary in medieval manuscript books, fostered contemplation of Christ's life, the devil's threat, and the Christian's role for the purpose of fostering readers' spiritual progress. Medieval bestiaries did so by encouraging readers to contemplate the natural world and interpret it in spiritual terms. In the period when the bestiaries flourished, medieval contemplatives believed that

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**9** On Dante's use of medieval bestiaries in the *Commedia*, see Guiseppe Ledda, "Quali colombe dal disio chiamate": A Bestiary of Desire in Dante's *Commedia*," *Desire in Dante and the Middle Ages*, ed. Manuele Gragnolati, Tristan Kay, Elena Lombardi, and Francesca Southerden. LEGENDA Imprint (London: Modern Humanities Research Association and Maney Publishing, 2012), 58–70. For a more comprehensive overview of the use of bestiaries and animal imagery in Dante's *Commedia*, see also Giuseppe Ledda, *Il bestiario dell'aldilà: Gli animali nella «Commedia» di Dante* (Ravenna: Longo, 2019).

**10** As Charbonneau-Lassay has comprehensively shown in *The Bestiary of Christ* (see note 7), the capacious imagination of medieval writers and readers was able to see aspects of Christ's life in many other animals as well. However, the lion, unicorn, pelican and phoenix will be primarily examined in this chapter, because each of these is interpreted to stand for two or more key events from the life of Christ, the Incarnation, Crucifixion, and Resurrection. In addition, it should be noted that these four creatures exemplify the medieval imagination at work on beasts and birds that either 1) did not exist or 2) did not have the natural characteristics attributed to them that were subsequently interpreted to have spiritual significance. At least one scholar, Pamela Gravestock, is of the opinion that medieval bestiary makers and users knew that many of the beasts in their books did not exist, but the importance for medieval people was in discerning their spiritual import. See Gravestock, "Did Imaginary Animals Exist?" *The Mark of the Beast: The Medieval Bestiary in Art, Life, and Literature*, ed. Debra Hassig (New York and London: Garland, 1999), 119–39. See also René Ward, "Bestiaries, Aviaries, *Physiologus*," *Handbook of Medieval Studies: Concepts, Methods, Historical Developments, and Current Trends in Medieval Studies*, ed. Albrecht Classen (Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2010), vol. 1, 1634–42. Cf. also Cynthia White, *From the Ark to the Pulpit: An Edition and Translation of the "Transitional" Northumberland Bestiary (13th Century)*. Publications de l'Institut d'études médiévales (Université catholique de Louvain (Louvain-la-Neuve: Université catholique de Louvain, 2009).

their imaginations (that is, the image-making faculty of their minds) formed a bridge between what their senses perceived and their intellects understood.<sup>11</sup>

The function of the imagination as a bridge to the intellect's progress in and toward Christ is investigated in Michelle Karnes's notable book, *Imagination, Meditation, and Cognition in the Middle Ages*. Karnes focuses on the concept of the Aristotelian imagination, in contrast to Platonic (or neo-Platonic) ideas about it, analyzing later contributions from Avicenna, Averroes, Albertus Magnus, and Thomas Aquinas as well. The imagination was understood within scholastic Aristotelianism as the quintessential bridge between sensory and intellectual cognition. "The senses know an object's material attributes, its size, color, and so on, but the intellect understands what the object is, that is, its essence or quiddity."<sup>12</sup> She particularly considers Bonaventure's thirteenth-century synthesis of classical and Christian ideas about the imagination, showing that Bonaventure (1221–1274 C.E.) developed the first major account of how the philosophical imagination could be transformed into a devotional one.

Aristotelian philosophy makes images pervasive in the act of knowledge acquisition, and by interpreting them through Augustinian philosophy, Bonaventure is able to locate Christ's presence to the mind in its cognitive images ... On the basis of these images, the mind achieves understanding at the same time that it knows Christ. The mechanism of understanding itself, properly considered, becomes a means to ascend to Christ.<sup>13</sup>

Karnes analyzes the role of the imagination in Bonaventure's meditations, including the *Lignum vitae*, *Vitis mystica*, and *Perfectione vitae ad sorores*, discovering that, for medieval contemplatives, "Since Christ functions in the mind to draw understanding out of sense knowledge, the mind that directs itself to Christ uses Christ to proceed from sensory knowledge of his humanity to spiritual understanding of his divinity."<sup>14</sup> Karnes's reading shows that the imagination was not viewed exclusively as "fallen," "sinful," or "under suspicion" (as it was in later periods), but as redeemable, redeemed, and redemptive, when focused on the life of Christ. Medieval believers perceived the presence of Jesus within the imagination, which connected them to Christ himself. The imagination fixed on Christ could therefore facilitate a medieval contemplative Christian's spiritual understanding and growth through the stages of humility, purgation, illumination, and unification with God.

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<sup>11</sup> See Michelle Karnes, *Imagination, Meditation, and Cognition in the Middle Ages* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2017).

<sup>12</sup> Karnes, *Imagination, Meditation, and Cognition* (see note 11), 19.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.* (see note 11), 19.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 20.



Bestiaries developed the richness of the medieval Christian imagination, the nature of contemplatives' memory, and their spiritual literacy – that is, their ability to discern the meaning of images of beasts in art, architecture, and other medieval material cultural media based on the beasts' depiction (*sic* specific iconic markers) and context – as well as in some of the content included in sermons preached in monastic and secular spheres. As repositories for knowledge received about the natural world from Greco-Roman texts and traditions of learning, and Christian allegorical interpretations from the *Physiologus*, they were enormously influential. To explore how the bestiaries influenced the late-medieval imagination, it will be useful to consider what bestiaries are and how they work as contemplative, devotional texts before turning to specific considerations of the Incarnation, Crucifixion and Resurrection of Christ represented through two beasts and two birds – the lion, unicorn, pelican, and phoenix – in medieval bestiaries in general and in the twelfth-century, deluxe, Latin manuscript known as the Aberdeen Bestiary in particular.

## Understanding Medieval Bestiaries as Christian Contemplative, Devotional Texts

Medieval bestiaries were manuscript books containing information about animals, predominantly wild animals (not, for the most part, domesticated ones), that were described in terms of their supposedly natural characteristics as well as their spiritual significance.<sup>15</sup> These books about beasts drew the zoological information they contained from ancient sources, such as Aristotle and Pliny.<sup>16</sup> Simultaneously, they carried on Christian traditions of allegorical interpretation, established in the *Physiologus*, an inspirational source text.<sup>17</sup> The beasts in the

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<sup>15</sup> For an overview of recent scholarship on medieval bestiaries, see Ward, “Bestiaries, Aviaries, *Physiologus*” (see note 10). For additional research published on medieval bestiaries since 2000, see the bibliography of Sarah Kay, *Animal Skins and the Reading Self in Medieval Latin and French Bestiaries* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2017). See also Elizabeth Morrison, *Book of Beasts: The Bestiary in the Medieval World* (Los Angeles, CA: The J. Paul Getty Museum, 2019).

<sup>16</sup> Aristotle's *De animalibus* and Pliny's *De natura rerum* were significant sources.

<sup>17</sup> For an English translation of the *Physiologus*, and an introduction to its history and reception, see Michael Curley, trans., *Physiologus: A Medieval Book of Nature Lore* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979), ix–lxiii. On the probable date of the original Greek and later Latin translations, see Alan Scott, “The Date of the *Physiologus*,” *Vigiliae Christianae* 52 (1998): 430–41.

bestiaries could be listed in alphabetical order, or subdivided into categories (land animals, marine animals, birds, and so forth), though many bestiaries begin with the Lion, “the king of beasts,” who was taken to stand for Christ the King.<sup>18</sup>

Bestiaries were written in Latin and translated into vernacular languages, including French and English. The height of their popularity was between the twelfth and fourteenth centuries, when copies were made for monasteries and noble households. Their influence extended in different directions: Fournival’s mid-thirteenth century *Bestiaire d’amour* adapts the bestiary to create courtly love literature; the early fourteenth-century *Queen Mary Psalter* (BL MS Royal 2B, vii) contains a full bestiary cycle within the marginalia and the bottom quarter of the pages for devotional purposes.<sup>19</sup> As just these two examples suggest, contemplation of the bestiaries could lead readers, writers, and illustrators in secular or sacred directions.

Bestiaries remain influential today, as evidenced by the creation of new types of bestiaries by magical realist writer Jorge Luis Borges and popular children’s fantasy novelist, J. K. Rowling, among others.<sup>20</sup> The descendants of medieval bestiaries can be found in colorfully illustrated “ABC” books for children, such as Graeme Base’s *Animalia*.<sup>21</sup> These modern *abcedaria* aim to teach both the beginnings of basic literacy – the letters of the alphabet and a

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**18** On the lion and the unicorn as symbols for Christ, see Louzada Fonseca and Pedro Carlos, “A nobreza cristológica de animais no bestiário medieval: o exemplo do Leão e do Unicórnio (The Christological Nobility of Animals in the Medieval Bestiary: The Lion and the Unicorn Examples),” *Mirabilia: Electronic Journal of Antiquity and the Middle Ages* 9 (2008): 109–32.

**19** On Fournival’s bestiary, and a woman’s response to it in a bestiary of her own, see Jeanette Beer, *Beasts of Love: Richard de Fournival’s Besiaire d’amour and the Response* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003). For the bestiary images beginning at fol. 85v of the *Queen Mary Psalter* (ca. 1310–20), see the digitized MS on the British Library website: <https://www.bl.uk/catalogues/illuminatedmanuscripts/record.asp?MSID=6467&CollID=16&NStart=20207> (last accessed on Oct. 14, 2019).

**20** Jorge Luis Borges first produced his *Manual de zoología fantástica* in 1957, later expanding it and publishing it in 1967 and 1969 as *El libro de los seres imaginarios*, which was translated many times, including into English as *The Book of Imaginary Beings*, trans. Andrew Hurley (New York: Penguin, 2006). For discussion of Rowling’s use of medieval bestiary concepts in her wizarding world novels, see Gail Orgelfinger, “J.K. Rowling’s Medieval Bestiary,” *Studies in Medievalism XVII: Defining Medievalisms*, ed. Karl Fugelso (2009; Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2012), 141–60. See also J. K. Rowling, *Newt Scamander: Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them*, illustrated by Olivia Lomenech Gill (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2017), which is a modern bestiary.

**21** Graeme Base, *Animalia* (New York: Harry H. Abrams, Inc., Publishers, 1987). As Mary Carruthers, *The Book of Memory: A Study of Memory in Medieval Culture*, rpt. (1990; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), observes, in the Middle Ages, “Learning the alphabet is part of grammar; this is also the point at which one lays down one’s fundamental mnemonic

vocabulary of words that begin with similar letters – and knowledge of the wild world of the animal kingdom, including familiarity with animals that children, in many cases, will only see on televisions or in zoos. In contrast to this, medieval bestiaries, the ancestors of our modern-day ABC books, assumed that their readers already had basic Latin or vernacular language literacy; they sought to foster *spiritual literacy* by fostering the development of the range and capacity of the imagination.

Because the bestiaries differ, sometimes quite dramatically, from our modern understanding of zoology, their value has occasionally been questioned or dismissed. Nevertheless, some scholars have studied bestiaries for what they reveal about the medieval knowledge of animals in the natural world.<sup>22</sup> This approach might be better reserved for discussions of the natural world found in later medieval encyclopedias, such as Bartolomæus Anglicus, where animals are described in terms of their natural characteristics without extensive allegorical interpretation.<sup>23</sup> Medieval bestiaries, unlike medieval encyclopedias, consistently contain meditations on the allegorical significance of beasts. This is an inextricable part of the genre.

Allegorical interpretations in the bestiaries, and in other types of books which they influenced, such as psalters and books of hours, indicate that they were used as contemplative, devotional texts. People in regular orders, as well as lay Christians, who wished to make spiritual progress through contemplative practices clearly used these books to inspire their imaginations to focus on divine things. The bestiaries can be analyzed in relationship to contemplative practices in terms developed so fruitfully by Mary Carruthers, who points to the primacy of the image in the training of medieval memory, both

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apparatus ... [which is connected to] the ‘characteristics of the animals’ [*voces animantium*],’ a collection of attributes that derives from the various versions of the Bestiary” (110).

**22** Wilma George and Brundson Yapp, *The Naming of the Beasts: Natural History in the Medieval Bestiary* (London: Duckwork, 1991). As Carruthers observes in *The Book of Memory* (see note 21), “What the Bestiary taught most usefully in the long term of medieval education is not “natural history” or moralized instruction (all instruction and the Middle Ages was moralized) but mental imaging, the systematic forming of ‘pictures’ that would stick in the memory and could be used, like rebuses, homophonies, *imagines rerum*, and other sorts of *notae*, to mark information *within* the grid” (127) – the grid being the system organizing a person’s memory.

**23** For an edition and translation, see *On the Properties of Things: John Trevisa’s Translation of Bartholomæus Anglicus’ De Proprietatibus Rerum: A Critical Text*, ed. M. C. Seymour and Gabriel M. Liegey (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988). Trevisa’s fourteenth-century translation, as well as the original Latin text, reflects earlier influences, such as the seventh-century *Etymologia* of Isidore of Seville.

among rhetoricians and contemplatives, and Michelle Karnes, who stresses the value of the imagination in the intellectual approach to knowing Jesus, not just the emotional approach of medieval affective piety.<sup>24</sup>

Medieval Christians, seeking to make spiritual progress through contemplation, took the techniques of *lectio divina*, used when studying scripture, and applied them to reading many different kinds of secular and sacred books, including the bestiary. The practice of *lectio divina* included silence, reading aloud, meditation on the words and images before readers in their books, praying through the words (usually aloud), and contemplation – visualizing imaginatively what was being read in a way that allowed readers to be present imaginatively and, often, to participate imaginatively in the action of scripture or other devotional texts – and then, finally, to put their divine reading into moral action (by giving to the poor, for example). For medieval Christians, these steps fostered spiritual progress up the rungs of the ladder of contemplation, from humility to purgation to illumination to unification with Christ through spiritual marriage that could take place before death, in a vision, but would certainly take place after death at the marriage feast of the Lamb for those who were saved and included in the *sponsa Christi*, the bride of Christ, the Church.<sup>25</sup>

The contemplative use of bestiaries readily explains their popularity (much more so than their zoological information does), and even their organization contributes to such use. Bestiaries contained within their allegories the means

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<sup>24</sup> See Mary Carruthers, *The Book of Memory* (see note 21); *The Craft of Thought: Meditation, Rhetoric, and the Making of Images, 400–1200* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998); and with Jan Ziolkowski, ed., *The Medieval Craft of Memory: An Anthology of Texts and Pictures*. Material Texts Series (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002). See also Karnes, *Imagination, Meditation, and Cognition in the Middle Ages*, which can be read alongside Sarah McNamer, *Affective Meditation and the Invention of Medieval Compassion*, The Middle Ages Series (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009). It should be noted that medieval bestiaries were not used exclusively for contemplative purposes. As Debra Hassig has shown in her analysis of twenty-eight bestiary manuscripts, produced in England between the twelfth and fourteenth centuries, medieval writers and readers also connected bestiary entries to identity politics, especially ideas about women and Jews. See *Medieval Bestiaries: Text, Image, Ideology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

<sup>25</sup> Cf. Revelations 19:6–9. I have discussed the medieval understanding of the contemplative Christian's spiritual progress through the stages of humility, purgation, illumination, and unification with God elsewhere, including *The Signifying Power of Pearl* (New York: Routledge, 2017), 12, and "Moses and Christian Contemplative Devotion," *Illuminating Moses: A History of Reception from the Exodus to the Renaissance*, ed. Jane Beal (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2014), 305–52, esp. 317.

of meditating on the life of Christ. The basic details of Christ's life came from the gospels, but these were also included in diverse media.<sup>26</sup>

Medieval material culture commemorates Christ's life in churches, cathedrals, monasteries, abbeys, sculpture, and stained glass as well as the micro-architecture of tombs, altars, and reliquaries. The liturgical year was designed by the Church to reflect Christ's life from Advent, which honored his birth; to Epiphany, which recognized his first appearance to the Gentiles; to Lent, which memorializes his temptation in the desert and ended with Holy Week, focusing on his Passion; to Easter, which celebrated his Resurrection; to Pentecost, which acknowledged the coming of the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Jesus. Major holidays inspired by the life of Christ included Christmas and the feast of Corpus Christi. Like time, space was understood in terms of Christ life, from the *mappamundi* to the local parish church, both of which were structured on the model of the Cross (*sic* T-O maps, popularized beginning in the seventh-century in the *Etymologiae* of Isidore of Seville). Pilgrimage sites throughout medieval world commemorated the life, body, and Cross of Christ.

Entire literary genres proliferated in the Middle Ages that resulted in the creation of books focused on Christ's life, including psalters, *evangelaria* containing the four gospels, and books of hours, which, while often Marian in devotional focus, nevertheless included the major events of Christ's life as well. Scriptural glosses, like the *Glossa ordinaria*, ensured that even the Old Testament was interpreted in terms that foreshadowed the Christ, and the *biblia pauperum*, or "Bibles for the Poor," typologically paired two Old Testament scenes with one of forty scenes from Christ's life to further ensure, visually, that medieval contemplatives read both halves of their bibles through the lens of Christ's life. The focus on Jesus pervaded other kinds of literature as well, from *vitae Christi* in universal chronicles (like the *Polychronicon*) to saints' lives (like those found in the *Legenda aurea*), to legends of the Harrowing of Hell and the virgin martyrs, to Latin devotional hymns and vernacular poetry (like "The Dream of the Rood" and *The Vision of Piers Plowman*). Even the IHS monogram was considered sacred.<sup>27</sup>

Medieval bestiaries emerged in this cultural context, one saturated at multiple levels by the influence of what was taught and believed about the life of Christ. Within their pages, bestiaries, too, told the life-story of Christ. However,

<sup>26</sup> The two paragraphs that follow identify the "diverse media"; information is summarized from Jane Beal, "Introduction," *Illuminating Jesus in the Middle Ages*, ed. eadem. Commentaria Series (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2019), 1–24; esp. 3–9.

<sup>27</sup> On the cult of devotion to the sacred name of Jesus, see Rob Lutton, "Devotion to the Holy Name in the Medieval West," *Illuminating Jesus in the Middle Ages*, ed. Jane Beal (see note 26), 129–53.

the *vita Christi* in the bestiaries does not come across as a chronological account, such as is found in the gospels, universal chronicles or *biblia pauperum*. In fact, the life of Christ in the bestiary tradition is not necessarily chronological at all. Instead, it emerges imagistically and allegorically. It emerges in relation to the reader-viewer's active, imaginative engagement with what is seen in the books and with what is read in the commentary on the images of diverse beasts, both real and mythical, that are included in the bestiaries.

At the heart of this contemplative, process-oriented, interactive textual tradition is a belief in God's two books: the Bible and the book of Nature. In the book of Job in the Bible, medieval contemplative Christians could read:

But ask the animals, and they will teach you, or the birds of the air, and they will tell you; or speak to the earth, and it will teach you, or let the fish of the sea inform you. Which of all these does not know that the hand of the Lord has done this? In his hand is the life of every creature and the breath of all mankind.<sup>28</sup>

So when they read the bestiaries, and participated in the thought-processes those books encouraged, medieval people could consider not only "the life of every creature" – many of which did not live in their own countries, but in far-flung places they would never visit (and, indeed, in places that exist solely in the imagination) – but also the life of Christ.

The justly famous Aberdeen Bestiary provides clear evidence for just how Christ-focused a medieval bestiary could be. This can be seen in both its prefatory matter and the allegorical interpretations of the lion, unicorn, pelican, and phoenix. The Aberdeen Bestiary (Aberdeen University Library, Univ. Lib. MS 24) is a twelfth-century, illustrated, deluxe, parchment manuscript of 103 folios, 30.2 cm by 21 cm, from the second family of medieval bestiaries, written in Latin (in a legible hand) and currently held in the Aberdeen University Library in Scotland.<sup>29</sup>

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**28** Job 12:7–10. On the "Book of Nature" trope, see Ernst Robert Curtius, *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages*, trans. Willard R. Trask. Bollingen Series, 36 (1948; Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1973), 319–25.

**29** As René Ward has noted in "Bestiaries, Aviaries, *Philologus*" (see note 10), there are over forty Latin bestiaries extant today, most produced in England between the twelfth and fourteenth centuries. M. R. James has studied the relationship of the bestiaries to the *Physiologus* and categorized bestiary manuscripts into families to show relationships between them in *Bestiary: Being a Reproduction in Full of MS li 4.26 in the University Library, Cambridge* (1928). As Ward summarizes:

In this study, James identifies four basic categories, or "families," which group together manuscripts with similar content. The first family includes all of the various Latin *Physiologus* manuscripts, all of which were produced on the continent between the 8th

It opens with illuminated images that illustrate the events from Genesis, including the creation of the world and Adam's naming of the animals. The bulk of the manuscript is a bestiary containing descriptions of more than thirty beasts, including the lion, tiger, pard, panther, elephant, beaver, ibex, hyena, bonnacon, ape, satyr, deer, wild goat, monoceros, bear, leucrota, parander, fox, yale, wolf, dog, sheep, ram, lamb, he-goat, boar, bullock, horse, mule, cat, mouse, weasel, mole, hedgehog, and ant. An aviary follows the bestiary; it includes more than thirty-five birds. The avian entries are intermixed with entries on trees (i.e., the palm tree and cedar), and then followed by one on bees (and the peridens tree), then several on reptiles, then creatures of the water, such as the whale, dolphin, crocodile, and fish. There are several more pages on the names and characteristics of trees, then a treatise on the nature of man and the parts of the body, and finally, a lapidary. The manuscript has been digitized, and its pages made available

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and 10th centuries and which also are typically organized into three groups or versions: version Y (extant in three separate manuscripts: Munich, Lat. 19417; Munich, Lat. 14388; and Bern Lat. 611), version B (Bern, Lat. 233), and version C (Bern, Burgerbibliothek, Lat. 318). The second family includes bestiary manuscripts in which the *Physiologus* text has been expanded with extra material from Isidore, Ambrose, and/or other sources. The third and fourth families include larger bestiaries, with a greater number of entries drawn from Isidore's *Etymologies* and a greater number of entries and illustrations of fish, invertebrates, and birds. Many of the bestiaries in these latter two families also have remarkably similar illustrations of animals and bird forms. (5).

This "family" system is generally accepted by scholars of medieval bestiaries, though it was revised by McCulloch (1962); McCulloch's dating of the second family manuscripts has subsequently been revised by Kay (2017).

On the transmission history of the Aberdeen Bestiary specifically, note that "The recorded history of the manuscript begins in 1542 when it was listed as No. 518 *Liber de bestiarum natura* in the inventory of the Old Royal Library, at Westminster Palace ... Several books 'escaped' from the royal library, frequently to other ardent collectors, and the Aberdeen Bestiary was probably given away in the early seventeenth century ... It was probably Patrick who gave the book to Thomas Reid ... Reid was Regent of Marischal College, Aberdeen and Latin Secretary to James VI. Reid gave it, along with about 1350 books and manuscripts, to Marischal College in 1624/5. When the Library was catalogued by Thomas Gray in c.1670, the book had the shelfmark 2.B.XV Sc and was called *Isidori physiologia* ... a shelf catalogue, MS M 72, was made in 1726. In this catalogue the excisions in the Bestiary are recorded for the first time, setting a terminal date for the mutilations. When Marischal College amalgamated with Aberdeen University in 1860, the Bestiary became part of the University collection." (*The Aberdeen Bestiary Website*) The artist may be the same as that of Bodleian Library, MS Ashmole 1511." (See *The Medieval Bestiary*, available at <http://bestiary.ca/manuscripts/manu100.htm>; last accessed on Nov. 5, 2019).

online with Latin transcription and English translation and commentary, which makes it readily available for analysis.

An elaborately illuminated manuscript, the Aberdeen Bestiary begins with an image of God garbed in blue and red, with his right hand raised in benediction and his left holding a book, standing on four rocks, which may represent the four elements: earth, air, fire, and water. His head is haloed in gold; he stands against a gold background in front of three decorated circles; the whole image is framed in blue and red. The text on this page begins in the image, “In principio ...” The text comes from Genesis 1:1–5 – the Creation story. Five more beautiful, illuminated images follow the first: God creating the waters and the firmament, which is paired with the Latin text of Genesis 1:6–8 (fol. 1v); God creating the birds and fishes with the text of Genesis 1:20–23 (fol. 2r); God creating the animals with Genesis 1:24–25 (fol. 2v); God creating Eve from Adam’s side with Genesis 1:26–28, 31, and 2:1–2 (fol. 3r); Christ (looking exactly like God depicted in the previous illuminations) enthroned majesty within a quadrilobe mandorla, surrounded by four angels and the four beasts of the tetramorph in circles in each corner (fol. 4v)<sup>30</sup>; and Adam naming the animals (fol. 5r).

These prefatory images, paired with key moments from the Creation story in Genesis, situate this particular bestiary – at least initially – as a book closely related to the Bible. Christian theological understanding of the unity of God the Father and God the Son is depicted visually by their similar likenesses, so that the reader-viewer-interpreter sees Christ as “with God in the beginning.”<sup>31</sup> The figures representing Adam and Eve resemble the God-Man in shape (if not in size or nakedness), bringing to mind the biblical concept that human beings were made *imago Dei*, “in the image of God.”<sup>32</sup> The sixth image of Adam (fol. 5r), now clothed and closely resembling the God-Man creating the animals (fol. 2v), reminds the reader-viewer that naming the animals was one of Adam’s first responsibilities. The Aberdeen bestiary thus gives readers the opportunity to participate contemplatively, imaginatively, in the study and naming of animals along with the first Man. It invites *lectio divina*.

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**30** As Rowland, *Animals with Human Faces* (see note 6) notes, “St. Gregory regarded the tetramorph as Christ incarnate: a man at birth, an ox at death, a lion at the Resurrection, and an eagle in his ascension. St. Jerome took the four beasts as the writers of the Gospels, the man standing for St. Matthew, the lion for St. Mark, the ox for Saint Luke, and the eagle for St. John. This last interpretation was widely accepted by the second century, and some three centuries later the symbols appear in art and sculpture” (119).

**31** John 1:2.

**32** Genesis 1:27.





**Fig. 1:** Adam Naming the Animals in the *Aberdeen Bestiary* (fol. 5r)<sup>33</sup>

**33** It is worth noting that this image is unique to the Aberdeen Bestiary among all the other extant medieval bestiary manuscripts that we have today.

This imaginative process reinforces memory through images associated with spiritual significance. As Mary Carruthers has observed, “*memoria* is discussed most often not in the context of rhetoric but rather in writings on meditation and prayer, in which a diagram-like “picture” is created mentally which serves as the site for a meditational *collatio*, the “gathering” into one “place” of the various strands of the meditational composition.”<sup>34</sup> In the Aberdeen bestiary, the image on the page has been created by an illuminator who has followed this process to encourage the readers of the book to internalize the image, so that it will stay in memory, available to the imagination, whether the readers have the physical book before their eyes or not.

On the next folio, the commentary on the sixth image of Adam naming the animals begins to more fully engage the reader’s intellect, connecting the previously seen image with a set of ideas, not from the Bible, but from accepted lore and teaching, which the bestiary-maker wishes to emphasize to the bestiary-user:

Omnibus animantibus Adam primus vocabula indidit appellans unicuique nomen ex presenti institutione iuxta conditionem nature cui serviret. Gentes autem unicuique animalium ex propria lingua dederunt vocabula. Non autem secundum latinam linguam atque grecam, aut quarumlibet gentium barbararum nomina imposuit Adam, sed illa lingua que ante diluvium una fuit omnium, que hebreica nuncupatur. Latine autem animalia, sive animantia dicta, qui animentur vita et moventur spiritu. (fol. 5v)

[Adam was the first to provide words for all living things, naming each one in conformity with the existing order according to its function in nature. The races of man later named each animal in their own languages. But Adam named them not in Latin or Greek, nor in the languages of any barbarian races, but in the language which before the Flood was universal, which is called Hebrew. In Latin, they are called *animalia*, animals, or *animantia*, living things, because they are animated by life and activated by the breath of life.]<sup>35</sup>

Here, the reality of a multiplicity of languages – the heritage of the world after Babel – provides opportunity to the readers to imitate Adam, knowing they cannot do so in the original Hebrew, but will do so in the Latin of the learned – one of the languages that “the races of man” later used to name “each animal.” These animals, these living things, are so called because they are *animentur vita et moventur spiritu*.

The bestiary thus presents itself as a book that appeals to the imagination and the intellect, not necessarily as a book meant to generate the emotions associated with affective piety. This is important to recall as we consider the

<sup>34</sup> Mary Carruthers, *The Book of Memory* (see note 21), 123.

<sup>35</sup> This translation is available from the digitized version of the Aberdeen bestiary online. See <https://www.abdn.ac.uk/bestiary/ms24/f5v> (last accessed Nov. 5, 2019).

lion, the first beast in the Aberdeen bestiary (and many other bestiaries), which represented three aspects of the life of Christ: the Incarnation, the Crucifixion, and the Resurrection. Whereas these three events could be portrayed in a way that deliberately evoked strong emotions, like compassion, in other types of books (books of hours, confessors' penitential manuals, florilegia of religious lyrics, etc.) and religious practices (praying at the stations of the Cross in a church, the culmination of Lent in the events of Holy Week, pilgrimage to sites of holy relics, etc.), the bestiary deliberately fostered a way of knowing God through imagination and intellect, which is why the allegorical significance of the lion is situated in relation to the lion's supposed natural characteristics.

## The Lion

As Charbonneau-Lassay, Rowland, and other scholars have noted in their studies of the medieval symbolism of beasts and bestiaries, the lion was believed to have three natural characteristics, which were interpreted allegorically.<sup>36</sup> First, the lion's supposed ability to hide its tracks with its tail was connected to Christ's Incarnation, in which his divinity was hidden in humanity. The Aberdeen bestiary states:

De tribus principalibus naturis leonis. Phisici dicunt leonem tres principales naturas habere. Prima natura eius est, quod per cacumina montium amat ire. Et si contigerit ut queraur a venatoribus, venit ad eum odor venatorum, et cum cauda sua tetigit posttergum vestigia sua. Tunc venatores investigare eum nequeunt. Sic et salvator noster, scilicet spiritualis leo, de tribu Iuda, radix Iesse, filius David, cooperuit vestigia sue caritatis in celis, donec missus a patre descenderet in uterum virginis Marie, et salvaret genus humanum quod perierat. (fol. 7r)

[Those who study nature say that the lion has three main characteristics. The first is that it loves to roam amid mountain peaks. If it happens that the lion is pursued by hunters, it picks up their scent and obliterates the traces behind it with its tail. As a result, they cannot track it. Thus our Saviour, a spiritual lion, of the tribe of Judah, the root of Jesse, the son of David, concealed the traces of his love in heaven until, sent by his father, he descended into the womb of the Virgin Mary and redeemed mankind, which was lost.]<sup>37</sup>

<sup>36</sup> Charbonneau-Lassay, *The Bestiary of Christ* (see note 7), 6–14; Rowland, *Animals with Human Faces*, 118–23; Margaret Haist, “The Lion, Bloodline, and Kingship,” *The Mark of the Beast*, ed. Hassig (see note 10), 3–22.

<sup>37</sup> The translation is available from the digitized Aberdeen Bestiary online. See <https://www.abdn.ac.uk/bestiary/ms24/f7r/> (last accessed Nov. 5, 2019).

A modern reader, encountering the description of the lion's first "natural" characteristic, is necessarily struck by its inaccuracy when compared to what we know from modern zoology. The spiritualized interpretation of this characteristic as representing Christ's Incarnation then seems all the more extraordinary.

This bestiary is, of course, an English book, made in medieval England, where lions were not native. Neither the makers nor users of bestiaries were very likely to have seen actual lions in England, let alone observed their behavior in the wild.<sup>38</sup> But as Carruthers has observed, the function of the bestiary was only partially to present natural science and moralized instruction; it was primarily to train memory by associating images with spiritual meanings.<sup>39</sup> The highly creative, imaginative process of reading, viewing, and interpreting a bestiary enabled contemplative Christians to see Christ in the scripture, commentaries, art, architecture, and other media in which the lion constantly appeared around them, whether they had ever seen an actual lion or not.

It is notable that the highly illuminated Aberdeen bestiary does not depict a lion in a miniature here, though it has many illuminated miniatures throughout the book that represent several of the animals described in its pages.<sup>40</sup> Perhaps the explanation for this is the appearance of lions in the full-page illustration of Adam naming the animals. However, there is another possibility. The absence of a visual cue impresses upon the readers the need to remember the image they just saw on an earlier page and to re-create the image in their own minds – to begin to "decorate" the book of their memory<sup>41</sup> – and to collate, or gather, the spiritual significance of the image of the lion, which is further revealed in the second characteristic and its interpretation:

Secunda natura eius est quod cum dormit, oculos apertos habere videtur. Sic et dominus noster corporaliter obdormiens in cruce, sepultus est, et deitas eius vigilabat, sic dicitur in canticis canticorum: Ego dormio, et cor meum vigilat. Et in psalmo: Ecce non dormitabit neque dormiet, qui custodit Israel. (fol. 7v)

<sup>38</sup> It is worth noting that at least two barbary lions were kept in the royal menagerie in the Tower of London in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. See "Barbary lions were part of medieval Tower of London zoo," *The Telegraph* (25 March 2008). Available at <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/science/science-news/3337200/Barbary-lions-were-part-of-medieval-Tower-of-London-zoo.html> (last accessed on Nov. 5, 2019). Certainly some Englishmen, either at home or abroad, could have seen lions. Most, however, would not have.

<sup>39</sup> Carruthers, *The Book of Memory* (see note 21), 127.

<sup>40</sup> For many other medieval manuscript images of the lion, see "Lion," *The Medieval Bestiary* at <http://bestiary.ca/beasts/beast244.htm> (last accessed on Nov. 5, 2019).

<sup>41</sup> Carruthers, *The Book of Memory* (see note 21), 123.

[The second characteristic of the lion is that when it sleeps, it seems to have its eyes open. Thus our Lord, falling asleep in death, physically, on the cross, was buried, yet his divine nature remained awake; as it says in the Song of Songs: “I sleep but my heart waketh” [5:2]; and in the psalm: “Behold, he that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep” (Psalm 121:4).]<sup>42</sup>

These simple Latin sentences form a braided reflection out of several strands of thought: the image of the lion, its supposed natural characteristic, the Crucifixion of Christ, an allegorical reading of the Song of Songs derived from Christian traditions of *lectio divina*, and an association with God’s wakeful, watchful care noted in the Psalms. Within a very brief space, a concentration of associated meanings and interpretations is conveyed to the intellect of the reader through the inspiration of the image of the lion.

Likewise, with the third characteristic of the lion described in the bestiary, cited here:

Tertia natura eius est, cum leena parit catulos suos generat, eos mortuos, et custodit eos tribus diebus donec veniens pater eorum tertia die insufflat in faciem eorum et vivificat eos. Sic omnipotens pater dominum nostrum Iesum Christum, tertia die suscitavit a mortuis, dicente Iacob: Dormitabit tanquam leo, et sicut catulus leonis suscitabitur. (fol. 7v)

[The third characteristic of the lion is that when a lioness gives birth to her cubs, she produces them dead and watches over them for three days, until their father comes on the third day and breathes into their faces and restores them to life. Thus the Almighty Father awakened our Lord Jesus Christ from the dead on the third day; as Jacob says: “He will fall asleep as a lion, and as a lion’s whelp he will be revived” (see Genesis 49:9).]<sup>43</sup>

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**42** Quoted from the digitized Aberdeen bestiary at <https://www.abdn.ac.uk/bestiary/ms24/f7v> (last accessed on Nov. 5, 2019). As Charbonneau-Lassay, *The Bestiary of Christ* (see note 7) notes:

St. Augustine, in commenting on a rather strange characteristic attributed to the eagle, tells us that in symbolism “the important thing is to consider the significance of a fact, not to dispute its authenticity.” Thus Christian idealism of bygone days always and in everything paid heed to the symbol and not to the thing, to the spirit which gives life and not to the letter which sucks dry. So it sees in the perpetually open-eyed lion the image of the attentive Christ who sees everything, who guards souls from evil ... (8).

Gravestock has argued along these lines. Even the commentator who composed the Latin text of the Aberdeen bestiary may be hinting that he is not sure that each of these characteristics really are natural to the lion when he notes, carefully, that *phisici* – those who study nature – say the lion has these characteristics. The composer thus situates himself as a reporter of others’ observations, not his own.

**43** Quoted from the digitized Aberdeen bestiary at <https://www.abdn.ac.uk/bestiary/ms24/f7v> (last accessed on Nov. 5, 2019). As Charbonneau-Lassay (see note 7) has noted, “The authors of the bestiaries in the Middle Ages certainly found this legend in Aristotle and in Pliny the Elder; yet Plutarch, better informed about the Orient and its creatures, had written that, on the contrary, lion cubs come into the world with their eyes wide open, and for that reason, certain

So the readers of the Aberdeen bestiary would come to see the image of the lion, in their memory and everywhere else they saw that beast in the ephemera of medieval culture, as a figure that represented not only the Incarnation and Crucifixion, but the Resurrection as well. In the bestiaries, the lion is Christ the King, and the lion connects bestiary readers to Christ himself. But the lion is not the only beast in the bestiaries that represents the life of Christ.

## The Unicorn

Like the lion, the unicorn was also interpreted to stand for Christ, particularly for two events in his earthly life: his Incarnation and his Crucifixion.<sup>44</sup> The association between the image of the unicorn and the life of Christ is clearly made in the *Physiologus*, upon which so many medieval bestiaries (including the Aberdeen bestiary) drew. In chapter XXXVI of the *Physiologus*, the hunt and capture of the unicorn are described:

In Deuteronomy Moses said while blessing Joseph, “His beauty is that of the firstling bull, and his horns are the horns of the unicorn” [Deut. 33:17]. The *monoceros*, that is, the unicorn, has this nature: he is a small animal like the kid, is exceedingly shrewd, and has one horn in the middle of his head. The hunter cannot approach him because he is extremely strong. How then do they hunt the beast? Hunters place a chaste virgin before him. He bounds forth into her lap, and she warms and nourishes the animal and takes him into the palace of kings.<sup>45</sup>

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peoples of his time consecrated the lion to the sun ... Although Cuvier and the modern naturalists confirm Plutarch’s opinion, authors and artists of the Middle Ages, relying on the scant authority of Origen and of the *Physiologus*, followed the opposite view. In such a thoroughly idealistic world, which sought to consecrate every truth by means of symbols, the fable of the lion cubs born dead and brought to life on the third day by their father enjoyed a great vogue; it was favored by St. Ephiphanius, St. Anselm, St. Ivo of Chartres, St. Bruno of Asti and many others. As Mâle puts it, “The apparent death of the little lion represented the sojourn of Jesus Christ in the grave, and his birth was like an image of the Resurrection” (10–11).

<sup>44</sup> Charbonneau-Lassay, *The Bestiary of Christ* (see note 7), 365–75; Rowland, *Animals with Human Faces* (see note 6), 152–57; and Louzada Fonseca and Pedro Carlos, “A nobreza cristológica de animais no bestiário medieval: o exemplo do Leão e do Unicórnio” (see note 18), 109–32.

<sup>45</sup> Curley, trans., *Physiologus* (see note 17), 51. For the Latin, see Francis Carmody Francis, ed., *Physiologus Latinus*, Editions préliminaires, versio B (Paris: Librairie E. Droz, 1939) and Carmody, ed., “Physiologus Latinus, versio Y,” *The University of California Publications in Classical Philology* 12 (1941): 95–134. Curley relies on the y-version, because it is closer to the Greek original, but he also incorporates translations from the Latin; he gives the Latin text in brackets in the chapters.

The *Physiologus* begins with a biblical reference to the unicorn in Deuteronomy, refers to the Greek etymological equivalent of unicorn, *monoceros* (“one-horned”), and then compares the unicorn himself to a goat-kid: small, shrewd, and exceedingly strong. These characteristics clearly derive from biblical tradition, including the seemingly odd comparison to a goat-kid, with the exception of the emphasis on the smallness of the unicorn, which does not.<sup>46</sup> The description indicates that it is the unicorn’s strength that prevents his capture by hunters; only a virgin can invite him to her lap, warm, and nourish him.<sup>47</sup>

The *Physiologus* provokes further meditation on the significance of the unicorn’s single horn, connecting its allegorical interpretation to two verses from the Gospels: “I and the Father are one”<sup>48</sup> and “For he has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David.”<sup>49</sup> It then connects the mystical hunt of the unicorn to Christ’s Incarnation: “Coming down from heaven, he came into the womb of the Virgin Mary ... ‘And the word became flesh and dwelt among us.’”<sup>50</sup> The unicorn’s smallness is a sign of Christ’s humility in the Incarnation; his shrewdness is exemplified by the inability of hell or the devil, or any powers or principalities, to hold him, comprehend him, or find him out. He is compared to the goat-kid because he is a sin-offering. The *Physiologus* cites Romans 8:3 to convey this idea.

The contents of the *Physiologus* were incorporated into later medieval bestiaries, which were greatly expanded from forty brief chapters up to one-hundred and fifty chapters, drawing on additional sources, such as chapter 12 “On Animals” of the seventh-century *Etymologies* of Isidore of Seville. Isidore’s description of the unicorn identifies the elephant as the unicorn’s primary foe; it also recapitulates the unicorn / *monoceros* etymology and refers to the mystical hunt.<sup>51</sup> As Charbonneau-Lassay has written, “the old legend of the unicorn, the

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46 The comparison of the unicorn to a small goat-kid is nevertheless influential as can be seen in a late-medieval altar frontal, *The Mystic Hunt of the Unicorn* (Swiss National Museum, ca. 1480). For a reproduction of the image, see Jane Beal, “The Unicorn as a Symbol for Christ in the Middle Ages,” *Illuminating Jesus in the Middle Ages*, ed. Jane Beal (see note 26), 154–88; esp. 177. Cf. Daniel 8:5.

47 Commentary in the *Glossa orindaria* on Psalm 78:69, attributed to Bede, may reflect the commentator’s reading the *Physiologus*. Thus, the inter-relationships between *lectio divina* and medieval bestiary lore proliferated.

48 John 10:30.

49 Luke 1:69.

50 John 1:14 cited in Curley, trans. *Physiologus* (see note 17), 51.

51 In the mystic hunt of the unicorn, as Rowland (see note 6) observes, “The huntsmen stand variously for the angel Gabriel, the Jews or God the Father pursuing the unicorn until it takes refuge in Mary’s womb” (154).

virgin, and the hunter was a theme eminently suited to represent the Incarnation and the redemptive sacrifice of the Son of God. Thus the unicorn became the symbolic image of Christ descending through his bodily birth into the bosom of humanity, represented by the maiden in the legend, and the hunter was the counterpart of the Jewish people who put the Savior to death.”<sup>52</sup> This idea, recapitulated from many bestiaries, is exemplified in the *Divine Bestiary* of William the Clerk of Normandy:

Iheus-Crist, notre Sauveur,  
C'est l'Unicorne espritel  
Qui en La Virge prist ostel  
Qui est tant de grand dignité;  
Es ceste prist humanité  
Par quei au monde s'aparut  
San people mie nel quenut  
Drs uves einceis l'espierent  
Tant qu'il le pristrent et lièrent.  
Devant Pilatre le menèrent  
Et ilec a mort le dampnèrent.<sup>53</sup>

[Jesus Christ our Savior is the spiritual unicorn, who made his dwelling in the Virgin, he who is of such high dignity. In her he put on his humanity, to which he manifested himself to the world. His people do not recognize him. On the contrary, the Jews spied on him. Finally, they took him and bound him. They led him before Pilot, and soon condemned him to death.<sup>54</sup>]

William confidently declares, here, that “Christ is the spiritual unicorn.” Yet, in contrast to the larger literary tradition, the Aberdeen bestiary is brief in its remarks on the *monoceros*. It provides an image along with a naturalistic description but leaves out the usual allegorical interpretation entirely.

Wedge in between entries on the goat and the bear, the entry on the *monoceros* reads thus:

Est monoceros monstrum mugitu horrido, equino\ corpore elephantis pedibus, cauda similissima cervo. Cornu media fronte eius protenditur\ splendore mirifico, ad magnitudinem pedum quatuor, ita acutum ut quicquid impetrat [A: impetat] facile ictu eius foretur. Vivus non venit in homi\num potestatem, et interimi quidem potest, capi non potest. (fol. 15r)

<sup>52</sup> Charbonneau-Lassay, *The Bestiary of Christ* (see note 7), 369.

<sup>53</sup> William, Clerk of Normandy, *Le Bestiare divin de Guillaume, clerc de Normandie*, ed. C. Hippeau, rpt. (1852; Geneva: Skatkin Reprints, 1970). Available online at <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k8979h/f5.image> (last accessed on Nov. 5, 2019). This dates from the thirteenth century (Paris).

<sup>54</sup> Trans. by D. M. Dooling in Louis Charbonneau-Lassay, *The Bestiary of Christ*, trans. and abridged by D. M. Dooling (see note 7), 369.





Fig. 2: The Monoceros in the *Aberdeen Bestiary* (fol. 15r)<sup>55</sup>

<sup>55</sup> For many other medieval manuscript images of the unicorn, see "Unicorn," *The Medieval Bestiary*. Available at <http://bestiary.ca/beasts/beastgallery140.htm#> (last accessed on Nov. 5, 2019).

[The monoceros is a monster with a horrible bellow, the body of a horse, the feet of an elephant and a tail very like that of a deer. A magnificent, marvelous horn projects from the middle of its forehead, four feet in length, so sharp that whatever it strikes is easily pierced with the blow. No living monoceros has ever come into man's hands, and while it can be killed, it cannot be captured.<sup>56</sup>]

This is the sum total of what this entry in the Aberdeen bestiary has to say about the monoceros – a stark contrast to the elaboration on the lion at the beginning of the book – and to what other bestiaries have to say about the unicorn.

While it is risky to make suppositions *ab silentio*, nevertheless, it is worth asking *why* the makers of the Aberdeen bestiary provide an image and a naturalistic description of the monoceros, but not a spiritual interpretation. A variety of practical explanations leap to mind: perhaps the bestiary-maker did not have an allegorical interpretation in his source texts (unlikely); perhaps, like later, medieval English religious reformers, he did not feel that scripture substantiated the interpretation usually given, and so he omitted it (highly improbable); perhaps parchment was expensive and in limited supply (indubitably), so he decided to fit the discussion of the monoceros on one page with bear (undeniable). Yet even if one or more of these practical explanations suffice, there may have been a reason for the omission connected to the memorial and imaginative functions of the bestiary in leading readers further on the way of spiritual progress.

Functionally speaking, the absence of a moralization of the monoceros may parallel the absence of a miniature image of a lion. Perhaps the maker of the Aberdeen bestiary expected the reader-viewers of the monoceros to remember previous encounters with unicorns and their meanings, and to fill in, from their own memories, what the book did not contain. Certainly, the last line of the description of the monoceros, like a riddle of the Sphinx, is provocative in this regard: “no living monoceros has ever come into a man's hands,” but a reader might know that one had come into a maiden (Mary). For those who know the legend, the fact that the monoceros can be killed recalls Christ's Crucifixion.<sup>57</sup> Though the idea that the monoceros “cannot be captured” seems at odds with

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<sup>56</sup> Quoted from the translation in the digitized Aberdeen bestiary at <https://www.abdn.ac.uk/bestiary/ms24/f15r> (last accessed on Nov. 5, 2019).

<sup>57</sup> This possibility must be weighed against two odd, mitigating factors in medieval bestiaries. First, even though “unicorn” is the Latin translation of the Greek “monoceros,” and educated, medieval Christian contemplatives knew this and therefore the word should be referring to the same creature, occasionally a bestiary can have separate entries for “monoceros” and “unicornis.” Second, when the allegorical sense is given as a gloss on the “one-horned” creature, it is almost always given in the entry on “unicornis,” but almost never given in the entry on “monoceros.” Nevertheless, in the source text of the bestiaries, the *Physiologus*, the words “monoceros” and “unicornis” are both used to describe the one-horned creature, and the

the idea the Virgin Mary “captured” Jesus, through the Incarnation, in her womb, but in another way, that idea resonates with the notion that the God-Man is omnipotent, and cannot be captured against his will, and so in a sense, is never captured by hunters, but rather lays down his life self-sacrificially.<sup>58</sup>

This understanding has implications for how we read bestiaries in general. If not every entry in a bestiary has all three parts – image, naturalistic description, traditional allegorical interpretation – then the explanation may perhaps be found in the imaginative function of the books of beasts in relation to spurring on the readers’ spiritual progress.

## The Pelican and the Phoenix

In the later Middle Ages, aviaries (also called volucraries), or books of birds, proliferated like bestiaries did. Sometimes they circulated independently; sometimes they were incorporated into bestiaries. The Aberdeen bestiary is one of the latter types of books. In addition to its entries on beasts, it contains more than thirty-five entries on birds, including the dove, hawk, turtle dove, pelican, night owl, hoopoe, magpie, raven, cock, ostrich, vulture, crane, kit, parrot, ibis, swallow, stork, blackbird, owl, [bat], jay, nightingale, goose, heron, partridge, halcyon, coot, phoenix, caladrius, quail, crow, swan, duck, peacock, and eagle. While many of these birds are mystically and morally glossed, and read as if certain of their natural characteristics are connected to aspects of Christ, the devil, or a Christian’s spiritual progress, the pelican and the phoenix are specifically connected to Christ’s Crucifixion and Resurrection.

The book of birds in the Aberdeen bestiary begins with the dove that represents the Holy Spirit.<sup>59</sup> In explaining why he commences with the dove, Hugh

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allegorical reading of the mystic hunt of the unicorn is given there in the book which is the basis of the later medieval bestiaries.

**58** Consider the words of Jesus in John’s gospel: “No man takes my life from me, but I lay it down of myself; I have authority to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment I received of my father” (John 10:18). The Aberdeen bestiary maker may be making a theological point here, in contradistinction to the usual allegorical reading of the unicorn, in order to affirm Christ’s willing surrender to death to redeem humanity.

**59** It is based on the contents of Hugo of Fouilloy’s *Aviarium*. See “The History of the Manuscript,” *The Aberdeen Bestiary*, available at <https://www.abdn.ac.uk/bestiary/history.php> (last accessed on Nov. 5, 2019).

de Fouilloy (ca. 1096–1172), the original author of the *De avibus* incorporated into the bestiary, directly describes the imaginative process that he expects his reader-viewer-interpreter to engage in when looking at his images and reading the accompanying text:

De pennis deargentatis columbe, columbam cuius penne sunt deargentate et posteriora dorsi eius in pallore auri pingere et per pic\turam simplicium mentes edificare decrevi, ut quod simplicium animus intelligibili oculo capere vix poterat, saltem carnali discernat, et quod vix poterat auditus, percipiat visus. Nec tantum volui columbam formando pingere, sed etiam dictando describere, ut per scripturam, demonstrare picturam, vel [PL, ut] cui non placuerit simplicitas picture, placeat saltem moralitas scripture. (fol. 25v, 26r)

[It is my intention to paint a picture of the dove, whose wings are sheathed in silver and whose tail has the pale colour of gold (Psalm 68:13). In painting this picture, I intend to improve the minds of ordinary people, in such a way that their soul will at least perceive physically things which it has difficulty in grasping mentally; that what they have difficulty comprehending with their ears, they will perceive with their eyes. I want not only to depict the dove by creating its likeness, but also to describe it in words, to reveal the picture through the text, so that the reader who is unimpressed with the simplicity of the picture may at least take pleasure in the moral content of the text.<sup>60</sup>]

Hugh's words here perfectly accord with the analyses of Carruthers and Karnes, namely, that the makers of bestiaries and aviaries "painted pictures," both visually and verbally, to "improve the minds (*mentes edificare*) of ordinary people," hoping that "their soul (*animus*) will at least perceive physically things which it has difficulty grasping mentally." Even if the pictures fell short of audience expectations, these book-makers wanted people to "take pleasure (*placeat*) in the moral content of the text."

As Hugh continues on, he says that he was converted from the clergy to the monastery, but his intended reader, from the military to the monastery. That is why he says he will treat the hawk next, since it represents the nobility.<sup>61</sup> These sentences are, of course, revelatory. While many different kinds of readers have used the Aberdeen bestiary since its creation until today, originally, Hugh de Fouilloy's *De avibus*, upon which this portion of the Aberdeen bestiary is based, was intended for a knight who had become a monk in the twelfth-century, one whom Hugh named "the lay brother called the Kindhearted."<sup>62</sup>

<sup>60</sup> See *Aberdeen Bestiary*, fol. 25v and 26r at <https://www.abdn.ac.uk/bestiary/ms24/f25v> and <https://www.abdn.ac.uk/bestiary/ms24/f26r/> (last accessed on Nov. 5, 2019).

<sup>61</sup> *Aberdeen Bestiary*, fol. 26r. See <https://www.abdn.ac.uk/bestiary/ms24/f26r> (last accessed on Nov. 5, 2019).

<sup>62</sup> For an edition, see Hugo de Fouilloy, *The Medieval Book of Birds: Hugh of Fouilloy's De avibus*, ed. Willene B. Clark. Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies, 80 (Binghamton,

In this section, Hugh adds, “Personally, I try harder to please the uneducated man than to speak to the learned – as if I were pouring liquid into a vessel. For to furnish the wise man with words is like pouring liquid into a vessel that is already full.”<sup>63</sup>

In this overall context, specifically between the turtle-dove and the night owl, Hugh describes the pelican. According to Hugh, the pelican is a bird of Egypt, devoted to its young. But as the fledglings grow, they *percuciant parentes suos in faciem* (“strike their parents in the face”). The parents strike back, killing them. But on the third day afterward, the mother bird opens her side by striking it and lets her blood flow over her young, raising them from the dead.<sup>64</sup>

The writer then gives the allegorical interpretation of the pelican:

Mistice pellicanus significat Christum, Egiptus mundum. Pellicanus habitat in solitudine, quia Christus solus de virgine dignatus est nasci sine virili copulatione. Est autem solitudo pellicani, quod immunis est a peccato sic et vita Christi. Hec avis rostro suos pullos occidit, quia verbo predicationis incredulos convertit. Super pullos suos flere non desinit, quia Christus cum resuscitaret Lazarum misericorditer fleuit. Et sic post tres dies sanguine suo pullos vivificat, quia Christus proprio sanguine suo redemptos salvat. (fol. 35r)

[In a mystic sense, the pelican signifies Christ; Egypt, the world. The pelican lives in solitude, as Christ alone condescended to be born of a virgin without intercourse with a man. It is solitary, because it is free from sin, as also is the life of Christ. It kills its young with its beak as preaching the word of God converts the unbelievers. It weeps ceaselessly for its young, as Christ wept with pity when he raised Lazarus. Thus, after three days, it revives its young with its blood, as Christ saves us, whom he has redeemed with his own blood.<sup>65</sup>]

This spiritual interpretation of the pelican corresponds to two key events in the life of Christ, his Incarnation and, as was more commonly acknowledged in the

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NY: Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies at the State University of New York, Binghamton, 1992). Available on the Internet Archive at <https://archive.org/details/medievalbookofbi00hughuoft> (last accessed on Nov. 5, 2019).

<sup>63</sup> *Aberdeen Bestiary*, Fol. 26v. See <https://www.abdn.ac.uk/bestiary/ms24/f26v> (last accessed on Nov. 5, 2019). Carruthers, *The Book of Memory* (see note 21) notes, commenting on Philippe de Thaon's *Bestiary*, another book of beasts, “the bestiary is described by its author as a ‘grammaire,’ or elementary book, derived from the *Physiologus* ... Thus the contents of this book were understood to be among the ‘puerilia’ of a medieval education” (127).

<sup>64</sup> *Aberdeen Bestiary*, fol. 34v, 35r at <https://www.abdn.ac.uk/bestiary/ms24/f34v> and <https://www.abdn.ac.uk/bestiary/ms24/f35r> (last accessed on Nov. 5, 2019).

<sup>65</sup> *Aberdeen Bestiary*, fol. 35r at <https://www.abdn.ac.uk/bestiary/ms24/f35r> (last accessed on Nov. 5, 2019).



sup pullos suos et effundit sanguinem sup corpora mor-  
tuoꝝum. et sic suscitac eos a mortuis. Constat pellicanus  
significat xpm. egyptus mundum. Pellicani habitac in so-  
litudine. q. xpc solus de uirgine dignatus ē nasci sine um-  
li copulatione. Est autem solitudo pellicani. qd immu-  
nis ē a peccō sic et uita xpi. Hec autem rostro suos pullos oc-  
cidit. q. ubo p̄dicationis incredulos conuertit. Sup pullos  
suos flere non desinit. q. xpc cum resuscitaret lazarium  
misericorditer fleuit. Et sic p̄ tres dies sanguine suo pullos ui-  
uificat. q. xpc p̄o sanguine suo retemptos saluat. Coora-  
licet aū p̄ pellicanum intellige possum non quemlibet iu-  
stum. s. a carnali uoluptate longe remotum. p̄ egyptum. in-  
tam mām ignorantie tenebris inuolutam. egyptus enim  
tenebre interpretat. In egypto q̄ solitudinem facim. dum  
a curis et uoluptatibus se li longe sum. Sic et iustus in ciui-  
tate solitudinem facit. dum immunit se in q̄ntum huma-  
na fragilitas patit a peccō custodit. Rostro pellicani pullos  
suos occidit. q. iustus cogitationes et opa q̄ male gessit.

Fig. 3: The Pelican in the *Aberdeen Bestiary* (fol. 35r)<sup>66</sup>

<sup>66</sup> This image is also available from the digitized *Aberdeen Bestiary* online: <https://www.abdn.ac.uk/bestiary/ms24/f35r> (last accessed on Nov. 5, 2019). For many other medieval manuscript images of the pelican, see “Pelican,” *The Medieval Bestiary* at <http://bestiary.ca/beasts/beast244.htm> (last accessed on Nov. 5, 2019). (last accessed on Nov. 5, 2019).

wider bestiary and aviary tradition, his Crucifixion.<sup>67</sup> The picture of the pelican-mother piercing her side parallels the piercing of Christ's side, when blood and water poured out.<sup>68</sup> The redemptive power of Christ's blood, to purify people from sin and save them, is evoked in this imagery without ever directly mentioning the physical parallel between the pelican and Christ – or the theological concept of the atonement. They do not have to be mentioned. The mnemonic function of the aviary works intertextually through the imagination of the reader-viewer-interpreter, who fills in the additional meaning from other book study, religious training, and liturgical, monastic, and spiritual experience.

Like the pelican, the phoenix is described as a Christological symbol, this time standing for the Resurrection.<sup>69</sup>

Huius figuram gerit dominus noster Jesus Christus qui dicit: Potestatem habeo ponendi animam meam et iterum sumendi eam. Si ergo fenix mortificandi atque vivificandi se habet potestatem, cur stulti homines irascuntur in verbo dei qui verus dei filius est qui dicit: Potestatem habeo ponendi animam meam et iterum sumendi eam. Descendit namque salvator noster de celo ala[s] suas suavitatis odoribus novi et veteris testamenti replevit, et in ara crucis seipsum deo patri pro nobis optulit, et tertia die resurrexit. (fol. 55v)

Our Lord Jesus Christ displays the features of this bird, saying: "I have the power to lay down my life and to take it again" (John 10:18). If, therefore, the phoenix has the power to destroy and revive itself, why do fools grow angry at the word of God, who is the true son of God, who says: "I have the power to lay down my life and to take it again"? For it is a fact that our Saviour descended from heaven; he filled his wings with the fragrance of the Old and New Testaments; he offered himself to God his Father for our sake on the altar of the Cross; and on the third he rose again.<sup>70</sup>

As Charbonneau-Lassay has written, "The phoenix, always the only one of its kind on earth, reborn from its own ashes under the burning rays of the sun

<sup>67</sup> As Charbonneau-Lassay, *The Bestiary of Christ* (see note 7) notes, sometimes the pelican piercing her breast is depicted in illustrations and emblems in a nest situated on top of an image of the Cross with the abbreviation I.N.R.I. on it (260), making the link to the Crucifixion even more explicit.

<sup>68</sup> See John 19:34. In the Middle Ages, the Roman soldier who did this was known as Longinus; his lance, "the Holy Lance." In Christian iconography, sometimes Christ's open side was depicted with the image of a building, representing the Church, inside of the wound. That a pelican-mother, a female bird, represents Christ here might call to mind the fourteenth-century anchoress, Julian of Norwich, who in her *Revelation of Love* understood Christ to be "our Mother."

<sup>69</sup> For a detailed analysis of this allegorical interpretation, see Valerie Jones, "The Phoenix and the Resurrection," *The Mark of the Beast* (see note 10), 99–116.

<sup>70</sup> See the transcription available from the digitized Aberdeen bestiary online: <https://www.abdn.ac.uk/bestiary/ms24/f55v> (last accessed on Nov. 5, 2019).



postea uero die nona aus de cineribz suis sur-



git. huius figu-  
ram gerit dñs  
noster ih̄c xp̄i  
qui dicit. po-  
testatem habeo  
ponendi ani-  
mam meam  
& iterum su-  
mendi eam.  
Sic fenix mo-  
tificandi atq;  
unificandi se  
habet potesta-  
tem. cur stulti

homines nascuntur in uerbo dei qui uerus dei fi-  
lius est qui dicit. potestatem habeo ponendi anima-  
meam & iterum sumendi eam. Descendit namq; sal-  
uator n̄r de celo ala suas suauitatis odoribz noui &  
ueteris testamenti repleuit. & in ara crucis seip-  
sum deo p̄ri p nobis optulit. & tertia die resur-  
rexit.

fenix etiam significare potest resurrectionē  
iustorum. qui aromatibz uirtutum collectis  
restorationem prioris iugoris. post mortem sibi  
preparant. Fenix est arabie aus. arabia uero inter-  
pretatur campedris. Campus est hic mundus ara-  
bia. est secularis uita. Arabes. seculares. Arabes fem-  
cem appellant singularem. Singularis est quilibet  
iustus. a curis sc̄laribz omnino remotus. Fenix q̄q;

Fig. 4: The Phoenix in the *Aberdeen Bestiary* (fol. 55v)



auris in locis arabie phibetur degere. atq; eam  
 usq; ad annos quingentos longeva etate pede-  
 re. Que cum sibi finem uite esse aduerterit. facit  
 sibi de thecam de chure & mirra & ceteris odo-  
 ribus in quam impleto uite sue tempore intrat  
 & moritur. De cuius humore carnis exurgit uer-  
 mis paulatimq; adolescit. ac pcesu statim tem-  
 poris. induit alarum remigia. atq; in superius a-  
 uis speciem formamq; reparatur. Doccat nos q;  
 her auris uel exemplo sui resurrectionem credere  
 que & sine exemplo & sine rationis preptione ip-  
 sa sibi insignia resurrectionis instaurat. & utiq;  
 auel ppter hominem sumit non homo. ppter autē.  
 Sit igitur exemplum nob quia auctor & creator



aurum  
 scos suos  
 impe-  
 cumpi-  
 re n̄ pas-  
 sul. resur-  
 gentem  
 eam sui  
 semine  
 uoluit  
 reparari.  
 Qs g̃ huc  
 annunti-  
 at diem

moris ut faciat sibi thecam & impleat eam bo-  
 nis odorib; atq; ingreditur in eam & moriat

Fig. 5: The Phoenix in the *Aberdeen Bestiary* (fol. 56r)

and the sweet-smelling fire of spices, is one of the most beautiful symbols of Christ.”<sup>71</sup>

## Conclusions

In the Middle Ages, the griffin, lion, unicorn, pelican, and phoenix were often viewed as figures that stood for events in the life of Christ: the Incarnation, the Crucifixion, and the Resurrection. These figures appeared in medieval bestiary manuscripts, which flourished from the twelfth to the fourteenth centuries, in entries that often included an illustrated or illuminated image, a description of the natural characteristics of the animal, and an allegorical interpretation of those characteristics that connected it to Christ. The function of medieval bestiaries has been variously interpreted by modern scholars, and it appears that these books of beasts functioned partially to present natural science and moral instruction to their readers, but primarily to foster the development of their memory through contemplation.

In the case of the Aberdeen bestiary, those parts of the entries that seem to be “missing” (i.e., the image of the lion, the allegorical interpretation of the monoceros, the specific parallel between the pierced side of the pelican and the pierced side of Christ) may have been deliberately left out in order to provoke the imagination of those reading, viewing, and interpreting of the book. For from the very beginning of the book, the bestiary-makers seem to want bestiary-users to relate to the book through the process of scriptural *lectio divina*, an established contemplative practice that deliberately engaged readers’ imagination of events in the Bible as if the readers were present when they were happening. As Michelle Karnes has argued, in the Middle Ages, many contemplative Christians believed that the imagination formed a bridge between the senses and the intellect, and that the imagination focused on Christ could lead to readers’ redemption and spiritual progress. Medieval bestiaries can certainly be classed with other contemplative texts that fostered the Christ-centered imagination. Indeed, the Aberdeen bestiary is an exemplary case.

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71 Charbonneau-Lassay, *The Bestiary of Christ* (see note 7), 446–47.

Siegfried Christoph

# Monsters, Grotesques, and Other Marvels in the Later Medieval Imagination

My departure point is the assumption that human imagination has not changed in the past millennium, at least not in its biological sense. Nor, I suspect, has the impulse that drives imagination changed since the Middle Ages and before. Paleoanthropologists have suggested that the evolution, if not the artifactual representation, of non-factual imagining helped humans to survive by keeping them alert to the potential dangers of known and, no less importantly, projected peril.<sup>1</sup>

The medieval imagination was, however, in a sense constrained. The compelling primacy of authority, inherent in the very term *authorship*,<sup>2</sup> reflected an experiential universe that was rooted deeply in the idea of revelation. In other words, God revealed himself through His creation, not least in the ‘fact’ that He created us in His own image. One consequence of the constraint against an imaginary *creatio ex nihilo*, was the aesthetic difference between ingeniousness and invention. An important part of the aesthetic imagination stressed the ingeniously artful arrangement, or rearrangement, of tropes, figures, narratives, myths, folktales, or history, rather than ‘making up stuff.’

In this respect, imagination is very much at the center of a fundamental debate in medieval literary criticism. On the one hand we have the conservative

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1 See particularly *Homo symbolicus: The Dawn of Language, Imagination and Spirituality*, ed. Christopher S. Henshilwood and Francesco d’Errico (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2011), and Agustin Fuentes, “Human Evolution, Niche Complexity, and the Emergence of a Distinctively Human Imagination,” *Time and Mind* 7.3 (2014): 241–57. The relationship between convention and experiential memory in the Middle Ages is discussed by Peter Dinzelbacher, *Vision und Visionsliteratur im Mittelalter*. Monographien zur Geschichte des Mittelalters, 23. 2nd rev. ed. (1981; Stuttgart: Hiersemann, 2017). See also more generally his *Europäische Mentalitätsgeschichte: Hauptthemen in Einzeldarstellungen*, 2nd rev. ed. Kröners Taschenausgaben, 4699 (1993; Stuttgart: Alfred Kröner, 2008).

2 See the recent collection of essays in *Modes of Authorship in the Middle Ages*, ed. Slavica Rankovic, Ingvil Brügger Budal, Aidan Conti, Leidulf Melve, and Else Mundal. Papers in Medieval Studies, 22 (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 2012); cf. also the studies in *Authorities in the Middle Ages: Influence, Legitimacy, and Power in Medieval Society*, ed. Sini Kangas, Mia Korpiola, and Tuija Aionen. Fundamentals of Medieval and Early Modern Culture, 12 (Berlin and Boston: Walter de Gruyter, 2013).

imitators. Their concern was primarily determined by form and deference to the classical authors. This is exemplified nicely by John of Salisbury's pedagogical admiration for Bernard of Chartres: "[Bernard] bade [his pupil] to rise to real imitation of the [classical authors], and would bring about that he who had imitated his predecessors would come to be deserving of imitation by his successors."<sup>3</sup>

Gottfried von Strassburg, the author of the Middle High German *Tristan* (ca. 1210), famously castigated an unnamed contemporary as a "vindære wilder mære" (4663; creator of wild tales).<sup>4</sup> By contrast, Gottfried lavishes praise on a mighty predecessor, Hartmann von Aue: "wie der diu mære / beide innen unde innen / mit worten und mit sinnen durchverwet und durchzieret" (4620–23; how he beautifies the tale inside and out with words and meaning).

Imagination was also thought by many to be digressive if unchecked by reason. As Michelle Karnes notes: "In medieval Neoplatonic writings, imagination is easily distracted by the glitz of the sensible world. When it leads the mind to be equally distracted, imagination obstructs understanding."<sup>5</sup>

On the other hand, the Aristotelean reflections on the legitimate role of the poetic imagination were made accessible by the twelfth century through translations by Arabic scholars like Ibn Rushd (Avarroes).<sup>6</sup> This helped to free much of literary production and criticism from the strictures of formal imitation and derivative authority.

Imagination could shape places, characters, and events that were rife for creation and embellishment. The world of monsters, marvels, grotesques, and the degenerate occupied a legitimate place in this tableau: "In the European tradition [...], some of the most influential scholars of the early Christian and medieval periods sweated over the definition and etymology of *monstra*, and the problem of the presence of monsters within God's supposedly perfect creation."<sup>7</sup> They remain a

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3 *The Metalogicon of John of Salisbury: A Twelfth-Century Defense of the Verbal and Logical Arts of the Trivium*, trans. Daniel D. McGarry (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1955), 69.

4 Gottfried von Strassburg, *Tristan: Text und kritischer Apparat*, ed. Karl Marold (1906; Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1969). My translation.

5 Michelle Karnes, *Imagination, Meditation, and Cognition in the Middle Ages* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011), 26.

6 For an overview, see O. B. Hardison Jr., "Avarroes," *Medieval Literary Criticism: Translations and Interpretations* (1974; New York: Ungar, 1987), 81–88. See also Kellie Robertson, *Nature Speaks: Medieval Literature and Aristotelian Philosophy*. The Middle Ages Series (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2017). See also the website, *The Medieval Bestiary: Animals in the Middle Ages*, at <http://bestiary.ca/> (last accessed on Dec. 8, 2019).

7 *The Ashgate Research Companion to Monsters and the Monstrous*, ed. Asa Simon Mittman with Peter J. Dendle (Farnham, Surrey, and Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2012), 3.

matter of fascination for several reasons, not least because these creations, both graphic and literary, have remained a staple in the popular imagination, and the subject of serious scholarly enquiry, to the present day.<sup>8</sup>

The term monster is often applied as a catchall for such diverse imaginative creations as dragons, giants, or merfolk,<sup>9</sup> not to mention such mythical extremes as the acephalic Blemmyes and one-legged Sciapods.<sup>10</sup> Yet, it may be useful to observe distinctions in the context of imaginative creations, however much such creations may be emblematic of a natural order that was perceived to be disturbed.

The world of courtly romances was to a considerable degree a homogeneous one, characterized by order, beauty, bravery, altruism, and good breeding. The heroes may be flawed; but they are rarely, if ever, horrible. Even the notoriously disruptive Arthurian gadfly, Sir Kay, does not rise to the level of horrendous, and at times he emerges even as a rather honorable figure.<sup>11</sup>

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**8** See, for example, Albrecht Classen, "The Monster Outside and Within: Medieval Literary Reflections on Ethical Epistemology. From *Beowulf* to Marie de France, the *Nibelungenlied*, and Thüring von Ringoltingen's *Melusine*," *Neohelicon* 40.2 (2013): 521–42. See also *Monster Theory: Reading Culture*, ed. Jeffrey Jerome Cohen (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1996). See also more recently *Classic Readings on Monster Theory*, ed. Asa Simon Mittman and Marcus Hensel. *Demonstrare*, 1 (Leeds: Arc Humanities Press, 2018). Cf. also Serina Patterson, "Reading the Medieval in Early Modern Monster Culture," *Studies in Philology* 111.2 (2014): 282–311.

**9** Merfolk refers to male and female beings, i.e., mermaids and mermen. See Arthur Waugh, "The Folklore of the Merfolk," *Folklore* 71.2 (1960): 73–84. Cf. also the contribution to this volume by Albrecht Classen. For a wide-ranging list of 'monstrous' illustrations from medieval manuscripts, see Damien Kempf and Maria L. Gilbert, *Medieval Monsters* (London: British Library, 2015).

**10** See the discussion of further 'monstrosities' in John Block Friedman, *The Monstrous Races in Medieval Art and Thought*. *Medieval Studies* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2000). For a discussion of the 'real' Blemmyes, a Nubian tribe described by Pliny the Elder in his *Natural Histories*, see Jitse Dijkstra, "Blemmyes, Noubades and the Eastern Desert in Late Antiquity: Reassessing the Written Sources," *The History of the Peoples of the Eastern Desert*, ed. Hans Barnard and Kim Duistermaat (Berkeley, CA: Cotsen Institute of Archeology Press at UCLA, 2012), 238–47. An early catalog of, and inspiration for medieval conceptions of monsters is the early eighth-century *Liber monstrorum*. The manuscript is considered by many scholars to have had an influence on *Beowulf*. On this point, see Andy Orchard, *Pride and Prodigies: Studies in the Monsters of the Beowulf-Manuscript* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995). See also Andy Orchard's online English translation of the *Liber monstrorum*: <https://web.archive.org/web/20050118082548/http://members.shaw.ca:80/sylviafolk/Beowulf3.htm> (last accessed on Dec. 8, 2019). For a discussion of the terminology in the *Liber monstrorum*, see Patrizia Lendinara, "Il Liber monstrorum e i glossari anglosassoni," *L'immaginario nelle letterature germaniche del medioevo*, ed. Adele Cipolla. *Scienza della letteratura e del linguaggio*, 12 (Milan: Franco Angeli, 1995), 203–25.

**11** See Albrecht Classen, "Keie in Wolframs von Eschenbach Parzival: Agent Provocateur oder Angeber," *Journal of English and Germanic Philologie* 87.3 (1988): 382–405.

The monstrous peril that the imagination *could* conjure up in the context of the genre essentially came in two forms: The outsider, who is not bound by the chivalric code of honor and who challenges the order of the court, or the strange and perilous lands into which the heroes venture, and where they best adventure against imaginary denizens. That remains essentially the form and function of the monster:

It is usual ... to talk about monsters as establishing or blurring boundaries, as provoking or allaying anxiety, as rich symbolic sites for thinking through, founding, disrupting, transgressing, and/or rethinking various identitarian positions of gender, faith, race, sexuality, species, and so on.<sup>12</sup>

Against this background, medieval imagination had available a rich store of existing memory.<sup>13</sup> The traditional tools inherited from mythology, fable, and allegory played a large part. Classical mythology offered a cornucopia of frightening ‘monsters,’ from Cyclops to the Medusa.<sup>14</sup> Aesop’s fables offered a treasure trove of anthropocentric and anthropomorphic visions of the animal kingdom.<sup>15</sup> The medieval bestiaries offered the most popular fusion of the exotic unknown and the imagination that distilled, transposed, and ascribed a whole range of anthropomorphic traits to the real and imaginary animal kingdom.<sup>16</sup>

The cornucopia of well-established monsters has important implications for the way in which an author draws upon and expresses imagination. The product of imagination represents a combination or recombination of experiential memory

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**12** Karl Steel, “Centaur, Satyr, and Cynocephali: Medieval Scholarly Teratology and the Question of Human,” *The Ashgate Research Companion to Monsters and the Monstrous* (see note 7), 257–74; here 272–73.

**13** See the essays in *The Monstrous Middle Ages*, ed. Bettina Bildhauer and Robert Mills (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003). Cf. also *Monsters and the Monstrous in Medieval Northwest Europe*, ed. L. A. J. R. Houwen and Karin E. Olsen. Mediaevalia Groningana, 3 (Leuven: Peeters, 2001), and Claude Lecouteux, *Les monstres dans la littérature allemande du Moyen Âge: contribution à l'étude du merveilleux medieval*. Göppinger Arbeiten zur Germanistik, 330 (Göppingen: Kümmerle, 1982).

**14** For an overview, see Carol Rose, *Giants, Monsters, and Dragons: An Encyclopedia of Folklore, Legend, and Myth* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2000), and Juliette Wood, *Fantastic Creatures in Mythology and Folklore: From Medieval Times to the Present Day* (London and New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2018).

**15** On Aesop’s reception in the Middle Ages, see, for example, Jill Mann, *From Aesop to Reynard: Beast Literature in Medieval Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010). For the use of fables in medieval education, see Edward Wheatley, *Mastering Aesop: Medieval Education, Chaucer, and His Followers* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2000).

**16** See Willene B. Clark and Meredith T. McMunn, *Beasts and Birds of the Middle Ages: The Bestiary and Its Legacy*. Middle Ages Series (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1989). On bestiaries, see the contribution to this volume by Jane Beal.

and learned memory. Experiential memory “consists in the evocation of parts of the original experience, allowing one to relive or re-experience the original situation and going over what it was like.”<sup>17</sup> Learned memory need not be based on direct personal experience; but it does represent a store of memories from which the individual can draw the building blocks of imagining. To the extent that a set of memories are structured and shared within a particular social group, one can also speak of a commonly shared ‘collective memory.’<sup>18</sup> In this sense, for example, later authors of Arthurian romances may be said to be drawing on a store of common memories in their characters and narrative elements.

When dealing with representations of monsters in the context of experiential or learned memories, it is important to bear in mind that certain aspects of belief in something can distinguish between imagination and reality: “The ability to form beliefs, make non-rational causal inferences, and conceive of some things as fictional while others are real is distinguished from the liability to believe something unreal to be real.”<sup>19</sup>

This distinction is particularly important for two reasons. First, it affects our aesthetic judgment of an author’s imaginative faculty. An imaginative construct like mermaid is well established enough in the collective imagination to suggest that its mere invocation in a work is likely not solely to be the product of the author’s imagination. Second, the very nature of scholarly annotation often invites the thorny question of whether precedent constitutes conscious inspiration and hence, by extension, risks diminishing our assessment of an author’s creative imagination. The longer and the more widely spread documented material becomes over time, the more difficult it is getting for an author to escape the impact of a collective imagination.

In the following, I would like to explore the concepts of the monstrous, the grotesque, the degenerate, and the marvelous in a later medieval Arthurian romance. This will be used as a basis for some concluding remarks on the nature of imagination and creativeness in light of neuroscientific research findings on the relationship between memory and imagination.

Konrad von Stoffeln’s late-Arthurian Middle High German romance, *Gauriel von Muntabel*, is interesting for several reasons in a discussion of medieval

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<sup>17</sup> Sven Bernecker, *Memory: A Philosophical Study* (Oxford: Oxford University Press: 2009), 14; also cited online at: *ProtoSociology*, p. 2, at: <http://www.protosociology.de/Download/Bernecker-Memory.pdf> (last accessed on Dec. 8, 2019).

<sup>18</sup> The term was introduced by the sociologist Maurice Halbwachs. See Jeffrey Andrew Barash, *Collective Memory and the Historical Past* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016).

<sup>19</sup> Anna Abraham, “The Imaginative Mind,” *Human Brain Mapping* 37.11 (2016): 4197–211; here 4199.

imagination. It comes at the tail end of a cycle of well-known Arthurian romances. By the late thirteenth century, European popular culture was quite literally awash with the artifacts of Arthurian romance, i.e., characters, plot lines, accoutrements, dialogue, and locales. In other words, there was a well-established catalog of artifacts available in the ‘collective’ memory, which in turn could not help but inform the imaginative process of later authors.<sup>20</sup>

I do not wish to use this as a launching pad for a critical assessment of the poet’s claim to creativity. Instead, I am interested in how the imagination processes memories, in this case the collective memories of past Arthurian and other works of literature, to create new, ‘imaginative’ elements that involve the no less well-established categories of monsters. A particular challenge in this context lies in the nature of the monsters themselves: “The genius of the medieval system was that it never required the monsters to change; indeed, the key to their diachronic utility was their constancy.”<sup>21</sup>

The term monster has become ubiquitous when discussing the vivid ‘creatures’ of medieval tales. It is helpful, however, to distinguish the monster, or that which is monstrous, from the degenerate and grotesque. Common to all three terms is the idea of something which is contrary to nature in two essential respects: it is either against the nature of a thing as we understand it, whether real or imagined, or it is something that falls outside of our common understanding of natural creation.

The medieval notion of monsters had already expanded from its original denotation of a “mythical creature which is part animal and part human, or combines elements of two or more animal forms, and is frequently of great size and ferocious appearance,” to signify “any imaginary creature that is large, ugly, and frightening.”<sup>22</sup> The term degenerate refers more broadly to that which “depart(s) from its race or kind.”<sup>23</sup> Finally, the term grotesque, though of considerably later coinage and originally confined to the visual arts, is included here as a descriptive term, since it is also intimately linked to the idea of distorting the nature of a thing for effect, having the “power of evoking in audience or

<sup>20</sup> See Carola L. Gottzmann, “Spätere Artusdichtungen,” *Artusdichtung*. Sammlung Metzler, 249 (Stuttgart: J. B. Metzler, 1989), 83–258.

<sup>21</sup> Debra Higgs Strickland, “Monstrosity and Race in the Late Middle Ages,” *The Ashgate Companion to Monsters and the Monstrous* (see note 7), 365–86; here 386.

<sup>22</sup> OED online: <https://www.oed.com/viewdictionaryentry/Entry/121738> (last accessed on Dec. 8, 2019).

<sup>23</sup> “Degenerate” in *The Oxford Dictionary of English Etymology*, ed. C[harles] T[albut] Onions, G. W. S. Friedrichsen and R. W. Burchfield (Oxford: Clarendon, 1966).



reader a sense of the radical alienness of the world, its ‘estrangement’ from man, and its essential absurdity from its point of view [...]”<sup>24</sup>

Monsters and marvelous creatures may be imaginative creations that bear no resemblance to the ‘real,’ experienced world. The grotesque and degenerate, however, presuppose some form of consensus about what the nature of a being or thing should be, or the foundation from which its distortion arises, in order to form judgments, generally negative, about how far – and to what effect – a given example of its kind deviates from its nature.

We may take as an example one of the most famous and early ‘medieval’ monsters, *Beowulf*’s Grendel. In appearance, mien, and action Grendel is undeniably a monster, “ferocious” and “frightening,” as witness the description (983–89) of his severed arm:

... Every nail,  
claw-scale and spur, every spike  
and welt on the hand of that heathen brute  
was like barbed steel. Everybody said  
there was no honed iron hard enough  
to pierce him through, no time proofed blade  
that could cut his brutal blood caked claw.<sup>25</sup>

Grendel is not, however, degenerate insofar as there is no consensus on how he – or rather it – *should* by nature look or behave, and hence there is no way to know in what sense he deviates from that nature. Monsters, the grotesque, the marvelous, and even the degenerate are all represented to varying effect, and with varying degrees of vividness, in Konrad von Stoffeln’s late Arthurian tale.

The motivation for adventure, central to the Arthurian narrative, is constructed early on in *Gauriel von Muntabel*. Gauriel, although a worthy knight, betrays the identity of his beloved, the demigoddess Queen of Friapalatus, by bragging about her beauty, and by implication revealing her identity, before a host of picnicking damsels. As punishment, his lady places a curse on Gauriel, turning him into a “schiuzlich gestalt” (290; hideous figure), “gar ungetân und

<sup>24</sup> Wolfgang Kayser, *The Grotesque in Art and Literature*, trans. Ulrich Weisstein (1933; Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1963), 15. On the general problem of defining the grotesque, see Michael Steig, “Defining the Grotesque: An Attempt at Synthesis,” *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 29.2 (1970): 253–60.

<sup>25</sup> *Beowulf: A New Verse Translation*, trans. Seamus Heaney (New York: W. W. Norton, 2000), lines 983–89. See now the contribution to this volume by Edward Currie.

wilde” (260; ugly and savage),<sup>26</sup> “daz iuch vürhtent wîp unde man” (260.1; women and men will fear you).

Gauriel is so ugly, Konrad informs us, that, if he were to tell us how ugly he was, no one would believe him. Early on, then, we are already faced with the problem of assessing the author’s power of imagination, or at least the degree to which he is prepared to capture the vividness of the Gauriel’s disfigurement in words. Konrad may merely be deferring at strategic points to the so-called *Unsagbarkeitstopos*<sup>27</sup> (‘inexpressibility topos’), in which the author cites with deliberate humility and for effect the inability, given constraints of time, talent or space, to express something in words. It is also possible, however, that Konrad’s ability to describe in detail the vividness of his image is limited, either by talent or dysfunction.<sup>28</sup>

This is not to say that Konrad lacks an ‘eye’ for imaginative, detailed description; but he is highly selective in his descriptive imaging. He devotes several lines (597–602.4) to the description, “als ich ez las” (600.2; as I read it), of a bejeweled drinking cup after previously demurring that to describe an ornate tent would be “ein langez mære” (594; a long story). Here, too, Konrad chooses to defer a textual authority: “daz tuot daz buoch schîn” (586; my text informs me on this).

Absent any detailed description of Gauriel in his hexed state, the audience may well see him as monstrous or repulsive; but there is not enough detail to judge whether, or in what way, he is either degenerate or grotesque. By way of contrast, Wolfram von Eschenbach’s Grail messenger, the sorceress Cundrîe, is every bit Gauriel’s equal when it comes to repulsiveness. Wolfram’s description of her is far more vivid, however:

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**26** All citations and translations are from Siegfried Christoph, *German Romance II: Gauriel von Muntabel*. Arthurian Archives, 15 (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2007). For an edition of the work, including the three major extant manuscripts, see Wolfgang Achnitz, *Der Ritter mit dem Bock: Konrads von Stoffeln ›Gauriel von Muntabel‹*. Texte und Textgeschichte, 46 (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer, 1997).

**27** The well-established *topos* was characterized by Ernst Robert Curtius as the “Betonung der Unfähigkeit, dem Stoff gerecht zu werden” (emphasis on the inability to do justice to the material). Ernst Robert Curtius, *Europäische Literatur und lateinisches Mittelalter*, 11th ed. (1948; Tübingen: Francke, 1993), 168.

**28** The inability to visualize has been described by neuroscientists as ‘aphantasia.’ See particularly Adam Zeman, Michaela Dewar and Sergio Della Sella, “Lives Without Imagery – Congenital Aphantasia,” *Cortex* 74 (2015): 378–80. For a more philologically oriented discussion, see Piet Swanepoel, “On Defining ‘Imaginary’ Beings and Attributes: How Do Lexicographers Cope with Culturally Determined Differences in Beliefs about Cosmology, Ontology and Epistemology?” *Lexikos* 15 (2005): 179–95.

[Her plaited hair] was long, black, tough, not altogether lovely, about as soft as boar's bristles. Her nose was like a dog's, and to the length of several spans a pair of tusks jutted from her jaws. Both eyebrows pushed past her hair-band and drooped down in tresses. [...] Cundrie's ears resembled a bear's. Her rugged visage was not as to rouse a lover's desire. [...] This fetching sweetheart had hands the colour of ape-skin Her finger-nails ... looked like lion's claws.<sup>29</sup>

In the definitional sense of the word, both Gauriel and Cundrie can be deemed monstrous in that they are hideous, unnatural, fear-inspiring and – in Cundrie's case especially – a harbinger of bad things to come.<sup>30</sup> Konrad has thus created in Gauriel his first creature, though rather less vividly than Wolfram's portrait of Cundrie. The latter's juxtaposition and commingling of descriptive source elements (boar, dog, bear, ape, lion) are grotesque. Although Cundrie's speech and bearing toward Parzival lack courtesy, she is after all there to condemn him, there is nothing beyond her grotesque appearance and role as ominous harbinger to suggest that she is a monster.<sup>31</sup> By contrast, Gauriel's monstrous hideousness remains generic.

Having established a rationale for Gauriel's state of estrangement, Konrad has his hero embark on a series of redemptive adventures, all designed to reestablish the disfigured hero in his lady's good graces. Many of these adventures take place in predictably perilous settings, i.e., fearsome, unnamed, and forbidding forests, populated by no less fearsome, unnamed, and forbidding monsters.

Gauriel's companion and partner in these adventures is a goat, praised by Konrad for its bravery in battle at Gauriel's side. There is nothing in Konrad's sparse description of the goat and its attributes to suggest that it is in any respect uncharacteristic of its type, nor that Konrad attaches any allegorical significance to it. It has a nominal heraldic role as Gauriel's coat of arms. The goat eventually plays a larger role in balancing the narrative episode of Gauriel's battle against Iwein, when the goat battles Iwein's lion. Gauriel's goat and

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<sup>29</sup> Wolfram von Eschenbach, *Parzival*, trans. Arthur Thomas Hatto (1980; London: Penguin, 2004), 163–64.

<sup>30</sup> It should be noted that Cundrie reappears toward the end of *Parzival* in a completely different role, namely as harbinger of the hero's redemption, and then her ugliness is no longer the issue; instead, she is presented as a highly learned and respectful lady. For a recent discussion, see Anna Szyrsky, "La Voix fatidique d'une Némésis: injure et malédiction; la Demoiselle Hideuse de Chrétien de Troyes et Cundrie de Wolfram v. Eschenbach," *Cahiers de civilisation médiévale* 59 (2016): 19–45.

<sup>31</sup> For a discussion of the gender-based aspect of medieval female 'monstrosity,' see Dana M. Oswald, *Monsters, Gender and Sexuality in Medieval English Literature*. Gender in the Middle Ages, 5 (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2010). See also Sarah Alison Miller, *Medieval Monstrosity and the Female Body*. Routledge Studies in Medieval Religion and Culture, 8 (New York and London: Routledge, 2014).

Iwein's lion are not the only subjugated beasts. Konrad introduces briefly at one point in the narrative "ûf einem wisent ein grôzer man" (3921; a large man riding on a bison), who abducts the daughter of a nobleman. The rider is later identified as Jôrant, lord of the "versprochen walde" (4120; accursed forest).

Gauriel's prescribed, and rather conventional path to redemption in his lady's eyes is communicated by a handmaiden, who is riding what is described as "ein pfert rôet same in bluot" (353; a blood-red horse). It is a striking image; but Konrad provides no further context or description to suggest that it is more than a 'fleeting' image. Here, as elsewhere, one could cite examples from other works in which such an artifact appears. It is difficult, however, to make an unambiguous, aesthetic judgment about whether such precedents constitute reception of an established tradition, unimaginative derivativeness, or conscious appropriation.

Konrad's disfigured hero continues to be portrayed indirectly. A messenger announces Gauriel at Arthur's court as "ein ritter ungehiure" (638; gruesome knight) and a "crêatiure" (662; creature). Citing Hartmann von Aue's classic adaptation of Chrétien de Troyes's seminal Arthurian romance, *Yvain*, Konrad goes on to compare Gauriel to the 'creature' that Iwein and Kalogreant encountered among the "wilden tiere" (666; wild animals) in a forest clearing. Here we need to recollect that Konrad was composing a late-Arthurian romance. In other words, he – and presumably a significant part of his audience – had access to an established 'collective,' learned memory. The role of a collective, or 'social' memory is important in the relationship between imagination and individual, experiential memory, as will be discussed later.

The question in the case of Gauriel's appearance is whether he can or should be called a monster.<sup>32</sup> In one sense, Gauriel's appearance invokes – in a literal sense recalls – the monster that induces dread, both by his very appearance (he is hideous) and in our projected experiential, personal imagination (how would we feel if this happened to us?). Appearance is not nature, however. Whether Gauriel's physical deviation from the usual properties associated with a noble knight constitute degeneracy is therefore a related question.

If we consider Gauriel's appearance as such, then he is arguably monstrous and degenerate in his ugliness, i.e., he violates an idealized and stylized aesthetic type of the chivalrous hero. He is presumably deficient in what the likes

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<sup>32</sup> The question is made somewhat more difficult because of Gauriel's description as *ungehiure*. The modern German term that derives from the Middle High German distinguishes between the attributive meaning, modern German *ungeheuer* ('uncanny, sinister'), and the substantive meaning, modern German *das Ungeheuer* ('monster'). The issue is largely analogous to the English use of 'monstrous' and 'monster.'

of Thomas Aquinas considered to be a defining feature of beauty, namely that it be pleasing to the eye.<sup>33</sup> Gauriel has lost essential elements of the properties that characterize his 'type.' Yet at the same time, his conduct and courtliness in all respects is consistent with the type of the noble knight. The fact that Gauriel *acts* 'true to his essential type' is acknowledged by all. However boldly and presumptuously he may behave in challenging one after another of Arthur's knights in combat, the fact that these challenges are issued at love's behest provides a legitimate rationale for his boldness and ostensible violation of the code that governs guests and visitors to Arthur's court.<sup>34</sup>

What follows is a series of adventures that fall into three basic narrative parts: regaining the love of his lady by proving himself in combat, a yearlong furlough from King Arthur's court to undertake adventures, and the celebration of Gauriel's reconciliation with his lady at Arthur's court. The adventures are populated by well-established heroes whom Gauriel challenges, culminating in the combat between Gauriel and Iwein, aided by their respective animal companions. Konrad's approach to his material is at this level predictably conventional in composition, characterization, and narrative. What is striking about these adventures, however, is the frequency and fluency with which Konrad incorporates a variety of fantastical creatures into the narrative. They offer a rich backdrop against which to consider conceptualizations of the monstrous.

Gauriel's adventures take place in predictably forbidding places, including a perilous journey through Jôrant's "versprochen walt" (4128; accursed forest), a "wazzer vreissam" (2737; perilous river), "wilden tan" (2743; wild woods), or other "wüstez lant" (4636; desolate land).<sup>35</sup> Konrad associates the places

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33 On medieval notions of beauty and handsomeness, see Mary Carruthers, *The Experience of Beauty in the Middle Ages*. Oxford-Warburg Studies (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013). See also Ananda Coomaraswamy, "Mediaeval Aesthetic: II. St. Thomas Aquinas on Dionysius, and a Note on the Relation of Beauty to Truth," *The Art Bulletin* 20.1 (1938): 66–77, and more recently Christopher Scott Sevier, *Aquinas on Beauty* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2015). On Middle High German perspectives, see Michael Dallapiazza, "Häßlichkeit und Individualität: Ansätze zur Überwindung der Idealität des Schönen in Wolframs von Eschenbach *Parzival*," *Deutsche Vierteljahrsschrift für Literaturwissenschaft und Geistesgeschichte* 59.3 (1985): 400–21.

34 See, for example, Siegfried Christoph, "Guenevere's Abduction and Arthur's Fame in Hartmann's *Iwein*," *Zeitschrift für Deutsches Altertum und Deutsche Literatur* 118.1 (1989): 17–33.

35 These commonplaces are staples of Arthurian adventures and mark the boundaries, literally and figuratively, that the heroes much breach. They are the realm of the monstrous and wondrous. See Dorothy Yamamoto, *The Boundaries of the Human in Medieval English Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), Corinne J. Saunders, *The Forest of Medieval Romance: Avernus, Broceliande, Arden* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1993), and Sharon Kinoshita, *Medieval Boundaries: Rethinking Difference in Old French Literature*. Middle Ages Series (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006). For a diachronic German context,

conventionally enough with fearsome guardians: dragons and giants. Gauriel's knightly prowess is undaunted in the face of "vor grôzen lintwurmen" (688; great dragons), and cudgel-wielding "risen âne wer" (691; giants who are defenseless) against his onslaughts.

Access to the wondrous land of Fluratrone is guarded by "zwêne lintwürme" (2599; two dragons). Even if these should be slain, there are "zwêne risen vreissam" (2802; two fearsome giants) guarding a bridge crossing. Likewise, the accursed forest of Lord Jôrant is guarded by "manegem wurme ungehiure" (4158; many a monstrous serpent) along with a menagerie of less fantastic, but no less fearsome "bern, lewen, leopard" (4159; bears, lions, and leopards). Another "rise vreissam" (4217; fearsome giant), completes the battery of hurdles. Unlike the generic giants encountered elsewhere, this giant is identified by a name, Witolf, though nothing more is said about him, as in the case of the messenger maiden's red horse, to suggest that this naming has a special significance or intratextual reference.

If we accept as a key aspect of verbalized imagination the ability to use descriptive, evocative language, for example metaphor, to communicate an image's vividness, then Konrad is arguably not adding anything particularly novel to his incorporation of monsters. The very existence and role that monsters like dragons, serpents, and giants play in the narrative are firmly established in his and the audience's collective, learned memory. Konrad's dragons and giants lack the kind of description or narrative context that could ostensibly claim novelty. They need for the most part only to be *invoked* in order to evoke a generalized and well-established image. In other words, Konrad can to a considerable degree draw on a shared imaginative memory of monstrous creations.

Not surprisingly, this reliance on the artifacts of an established tradition is reflected in our aesthetic judgment. In the case of Konrad, for example, critics have faulted an overall lack of novelty: "[D]as Gattungsmuster des Artusromans [reduziert sich] auf bloße Übersteigerung seit langem bekannter Denk- und Darstellungsschemata, ist insofern nicht mehr produktiv und wird als Medium neuer Weltentwürfe ungeeignet" (The generic pattern of the Arthurian romance is reduced to mere exaggeration of long established thought and representational

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see Albrecht Classen, "The Role of the Forest in German Literature: From the Medieval Forest to the Grünes Band. Motif Studies and Motivational Strategies for the Teaching of the Middle Ages," *Journal of Literature and Art Studies* 4.3 (2014): 149–64, and id., *The Forest in Medieval German Literature: Ecocritical Readings from a Historical Perspective*. Ecocritical Theory and Practice (Lanham, Boulder, et al.: Lexington Books, 2015). See also Tina Marie Boyer, *The Giant Hero in Medieval Literature*. Explorations in Medieval Culture, 5 (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2016).

schemata, therefore no longer productive, and it becomes unsuitable as a medium for new world conceptions).<sup>36</sup> Another critic put it even more bluntly: “The narrative seems remarkably weak in proportion, motivation, and integration of episodes.”<sup>37</sup>

Putative lack of originality in effect becomes the litmus test for assessing creative imagination. Evidence of common memory is undeniably omnipresent in Konrad’s tale: “[I]n der Tat ist die Geschichte Gauriels [...] so erzählt, daß der literaturkundige Leser/Hörer sich ständig erinnert fühlt, erinnert an etwas irgendwie Ähnliches – aber wie genau und warum? Hier sollte man [...] einmal weiterdenken” (Gauriel’s story is indeed told so that the reader/listener versed in literature feels constantly reminded, reminded of something similar – but how exactly and why? We should think a step further here).<sup>38</sup> Thinking ‘a step further’ involves reconsidering what is meant by and can be expected of imagination as a creative process.

That said, the matter of an aesthetic imagination in general – and of the medieval imagination in particular – boils down to three essential qualities when it comes to assessing imaginative artifacts, like dragons and giants, that have become part of a collective imagination. These qualities, moreover, represent the potential for creativity that an author can aspire to. First, the ability to draw novel connections between and among disparate elements of a shared and individual set of learned or recalled memories. Second, the ability to shape or guide the audience’s imaginative impulse through verbally expressed degrees of the vividness or novelty evoked by the author’s imaginative associations. Third, the aim to encourage an audience’s imaginative disposition. Whether or not the author succeeds in creating and maintaining an imaginative disposition in an audience depends as much on individual perception as it does on shared cultural norms. Aesthetic judgments are often adversely affected by the knowledge that a name, object, narrative element, or plot device is not ‘original’; and yet that very

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36 Hans-Joachim Behr, “Höfischer Roman und Heldenepik,” *Deutsche Literatur: Von der Handschrift zum Buchdruck. Spätmittelalter, Reformation, Humanismus (1320–1572)*, ed. Ingrid Bennewitz and Ulrich Müller. Rororo, 6251 (Reinbek b. Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1991), 125–39; here 129. My translation.

37 Stephen L. Wailes, “Konrad von Stoffeln,” *The New Arthurian Encyclopedia: New Edition*, ed. Norris J. Lacy, Geoffrey Ashe, Sandra Ness Ihle, Marianne E. Kalinke, and Raymond H. Thompson (New York: Taylor & Francis, 2013), 263.

38 Isolde Neugart, “Beobachtungen zum Gauriel von Muntabel,” *Festschrift Walter Haug and Burghart Wachinger*, ed. Johannes Janota, Paul Sappler, Frieder Schanze, Benedikt K. Vollmann, Gisela Vollmann-Profe, and Hans-Joachim Ziegeler (Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2010), 603–16; here 603. My translation.

process of seeking analogues and precedents is the staple of a thorough, critically annotated edition.

Konrad is particularly keen to play on the audience's imaginative disposition. He prepares his audience for an emotionally responsive state. References to an impending "vremdiu geschiht" (3851; strange story), a "vremde crêatiure" (3203; strange creature), or a "vremdiu mære" (4254; strange tale) are all designed to create a sense of suspenseful anticipation. In addition, Konrad is fond of challenging the audience's presumptive (in)credulity by asserting his nominal role as narrator of transmitted material. If he were, for example, to count the number of cooks in a company of attendants, his audience would deem it a lie: "sô dûhte iuch an dem mære / daz ez ein luge wære" (5455–56; you would think that my story is made up), "diu mære sint âne lougen" (5545; the story is not made up). The deference to authority has itself become an established part of the collective imagination; Konrad refers casually to his own 'source' in the tale's last line: "ze Hispanje er daz buoch gewan" (5670; he found the book in Spain).<sup>39</sup>

While Konrad's dragons and giants are largely drawn from the stock-in-trade of medieval monsters, there are many other fantastic creatures and artifacts that appear in Konrad's work. The fact that Gauriel's beloved, the Lady of Fluratrone, is a supernatural being allows Konrad considerable liberty to include fabulous beings and wondrous objects within her sphere of influence. These are no longer monsters as such, for they inspire amazement more so than fear. While Konrad is largely content to place stock monsters in predictable contexts and without description or distinguishing characteristics, he is more expansive when it comes to the other fantastical elements.

Although a scholarly investigation of potential sources or precedents may gainsay Konrad's claim to originality to a large extent, the matter of the relationship between experiential and learned memory, and how this relationship ultimately impacts creativity and novelty, deserves to be considered as well. While Konrad's monsters may lack 'imagination' in the sense that they are lacking

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<sup>39</sup> Konrad may well have been hinting at the disputed figure of Kyot and the provenance of a Spanish source for Wolfram von Eschenbach's story of *Parzival*. The deference to authority, both in general and in the case of an 'exotic' Spanish source in particular, would likely have been a part of the collective memory. For a recent discussion, see Michael Stolz, "Kyot und Kundrie: Expertenwissen in Wolframs *Parzival*," *Wissen, maßgeschneidert: Experten und Expertenkulturen im Europa der Vormoderne*, ed. Björn Reich, Frank Rexroth, and Matthias Roick. *Historische Zeitschrift. Beiheft*, n.F., 57 (Munich: Oldenbourg Verlag, 2012), 83–113. See also Albrecht Classen, "Noch einmal zu Wolframs 'spekulativer' Kyôt-Quelle im Licht jüdischer Kultur und Philosophie des zwölften Jahrhunderts," *Studi Medievali* XLVI (2005): 281–308.



descriptive attributes, his other creatures and marvelous artifacts are given considerably more attention.

Two related occasions offer Konrad opportunity to display his imaginative powers. The first occurs within the context of Gauriel's reconciliation and wedding. The episode centers on Gauriel's healing from the disfigurement and preparation for the adventures that he begs leave to undertake following the wedding ceremony and at Erec's behest.<sup>40</sup>

The fact that Gauriel's beloved is a supernatural being affords Konrad opportunities for bringing into her orbit a parade of strange and wondrous creatures. She and Gauriel reconcile following his successful completion of the assigned task. His looks are restored by "ein salben" (3045; a salve) that her handmaiden is to apply to Gauriel in preparation for the wedding feast. In addition, Gauriel and his accompanying knights are each given "badekappen" (3053; bathrobes) with the wondrous property that they fit perfectly all who wear it.

Finally, Gauriel and his companions are given belts made "von edeler salamandrîn" (3066; made of precious salamander skin).<sup>41</sup> The belts are fireproof (3070), protect against "wurm eiter" (3071; serpent venom), and keep a horse from shying or losing its footing in treacherous terrain (3075–76). The salamander's marvelous properties are in key respects consistent with the description commonly found in medieval bestiaries, such as the *Physiologus* (second to fourth century C.E.).<sup>42</sup> Unlikely as it is that Konrad's audience would not be familiar with the salamander's attributes, he nonetheless feels compelled to insist

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40 In Hartmann von Aue's *Erec*, ed. and trans. Thomas Cramer. 25th ed. (1972; Frankfurt a. M.: Fischer, 2003), the eponymous hero loses sight of his knightly responsibilities after marriage, and so it is ironic that he should be the one to warn Gauriel against conjugal languidness. Konrad devotes considerable space to Erec's explanation of why it is important for Gauriel to maintain his knightly credentials. In Konrad's tale, Erec is also at pains to exonerate his wife, Ênîte: "des war ir mîn laster leit / und klagete ez durch ir güete" (my shame was a burden to her, and, being kind-hearted, she lamented it; 3290–91). See also James A. Rushing, "Erec's Uxuriousness," *Discourses on Love, Marriage, and Transgression in Medieval and Early Modern Literature*, ed. Albrecht Classen. Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies, 278 (Tempe, AZ: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2004 [appeared in 2005]), 163–80.

41 On the use of animal skins in epistemological terms, see Sarah Kay, *Animal Skins and the Reading Self in Medieval Latin and French Bestiaries* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2017). On the plausibility of medieval fireproof textiles, see Clare Browne, "Salamander's Wool: The Historical Evidence for Textiles Woven with Asbestos Fibre," *Textile History* 34.1 (2003): 64–73.

42 Konrad reverses the traditional toxic attribute of the salamander found in medieval bestiaries and commentaries. Konrad has the salamander as protection against venom, while the bestiaries warn against the salamander's poisonous properties. See T. H. White, *The Book of*

on his own ability to verify the account: “der wurm wirt in dem viur erzogen / daz <sage> ich iu vür ungetrogen” (3079–80; the serpent is bred in fire; I am not lying). Here, as elsewhere, Konrad characteristically seeks to satisfy two impulses at once: to display his creativity and imaginative powers while at the same time appealing to authority and credibility.

The actual wedding ceremony includes further imaginative elements, not least in Konrad’s description of the bridal party. The faerie queen’s retinue includes merfolk. While their physical attributes are not described, Konrad emphasizes their wondrous artisan skills. They crafted “tische [...] helfenbein” (3173; ivory tables) and intricate seats from “vischgræten” (3177; fish bones).

Many a “seltsâm man” (3201; strange man) and “vremde créatiure” (3203; creature) assemble from out of the wilderness to attend Gauriel’s wedding to the Queen of Friapalature, including wild men,<sup>43</sup> “der ander <kleider> nie gewan / wan als in sîn selbes hâr” (3212–13; without any clothes other than their hair), and the artisan merfolk. These beings are not monsters, I would argue, since there is no longer anything fearsome, dangerous, or foreboding about them. They are certainly strange and outlandish, as Konrad characterizes them, but they are not monstrous. They excite curiosity rather than dread.<sup>44</sup>

Nor are these creatures degenerate, absent indication that they are in significant respects deviating from their type. If anything, the merfolk are grotesque in a traditional sense. They blend different species-specific characteristics to create a wondrous effect. They may come from the sea; but they are far removed in their appearance, not to mention artisan skill, from the fearsome sea monsters depicted in medieval nautical maps.

To safeguard Gauriel on his subsequent adventures, he is given a ring that protects him from “wazzernôt” (3377; water peril), as well as “unrehten tôt / vergift und aller zouberlist” (3378–79; wrongful death, poisoning and all manner of witchcraft). Together with the salamander skins, these amulets protect Gauriel, even as they anticipate upcoming adventurous scenarios in which their shielding power will be put to the test.

The second occasion for showcasing imaginative creatures comes at the conclusion of the tale, when the final reunion of Gauriel and his wife is celebrated at Arthur’s court. When Gauriel’s wife arrives at Arthur’s court, the

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*Beasts: Being a Translation from a Latin Bestiary of the Twelfth Century* (1954; New York: G. P. Putnam’s Sons, 1960). See also the contribution to this volume by Jane Beal.

<sup>43</sup> See Timothy Husband and Gloria Gilmore-House, *The Wild Man: Medieval Myth and Symbolism* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1981), and, more recently, Lorraine Kochanske Stock, *The Medieval Wild Man* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008).

<sup>44</sup> See also the contribution to this volume by Albrecht Classen.

vanguard of her sizable entourage does full credit to her status as a queen and demigoddess. Here, finally, Konrad gives full voice to his imagination.

The wondrous parade is steered by “vier risen lange” (5459; four great giants) who wield iron rods. The company includes all manner of “merwunder” (5476; merfolk). There follow beings “halp tier und halp man” (5479; half animal and half human), as well as beings “halp man und halp wurm” (5481; half human and half serpent). There are beings “mit breiten henden âne arm” (5484; with broad hands but without arms), and several “mit vüezen âne bein” (5485; with feet lacking legs);<sup>45</sup> beings whose bones “viurrôt schein / [...] durch den lîp” (5486–87; glowed blazing red through their skin); beings of normal stature normal except that they were “âne houbet und âne munde” (5491; neither head nor mouth); headless Blemmyes who “ûz der bruste sprach” (5498; spoke out of their chests).

The catalog of grotesque creatures continues to grow in number and detail. The entourage includes a group of wild men with “kleine bein und vuze breit” (5507; short legs and broad feet), “von vischveder was ir kleit” (5508; dressed in sealskin), “sîn rachen und sîn vinger / hâten wahs klâ” (5510–11; with sharp claws and fangs); “die ougenbrâ / gewahsen über die stirne, / dâ hindenân gên dem hirne” (5512–14; their eyebrows grew backwards over their foreheads), which were topped by “hürnîne spiez” (5517; horns). Many a “rûchen man” (5528; savage creature) stared Argos-like out of “zwelf ougen” (5529; twelve eyes). They belched “viur, rouch und swivel” (5534; fire, smoke, and sulphur) and were “swarz als mören” (5536; black as Moors); “etelîchen scharte daz gebein” (5537; the bones of many were rattling). To top things off, their eyes were as “grôz als ein liechter stein” (5538; big as shining stones).

This assembly was indeed wild and wondrous to behold, as Konrad assures us no less than nine times during this 100+ line inventory (“wunder,” marvel; 5464, 5478, 5482, 5525, 5542, 5549; “wilde,” wild, 5467, 5505; “wunderliche diet,” fantastical company, 5545). At no point, however, is there any suggestion in Konrad’s reading that this band is meant to strike fear in others, or that they signal harm to the ‘human’ hosts. They are, in short, not monsters in our sense of the word. They are the wondrous, awe-inspiring denizens of the demigoddess’s realm, brought in

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<sup>45</sup> It is possible that imagination here draws on extrapolation from real physical characteristics associated with congenital abnormalities. The relationship between imaginative monsters and medicine is the subject of teratology. See Mark V. Barrow, “A Brief History of Teratology to the Early 20th Century,” *Problems of Birth Defects: From Hippocrates to Thalidomide and After*, ed. T. V. N. Persaud (Baltimore, MD: University Park Press, 1977), 18–28. See also Stephen T. Asma, *On Monsters: An Unnatural History of Our Worst Fears* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), part 3.

honor of a celebratory occasion. Konrad's own harshest critique of them is that "erzürnet wære ir muot" (5551; they were irascible). Small wonder, as Konrad notes in passing, since "in [was] vil ungenæme / der lîp und ir gebâren" (5522–23; many of them were uncomfortable in and with their own bodies). They are grotesque and monstrous; but they are no longer monsters meant to terrify or signal impending peril.

There remains the issue of the degenerate. The imaginative creatures that populate Konrad's work act according to their nature, or rather we have no basis to assume that they behave contrary to their nature. That said, Konrad does include a couple of interesting examples to consider from the perspective of degeneracy.

One of the first adventures that Gauriel faces involves the "grâve von dem wîzen steine" (1503; Lord of the White Rock). This lord had his sights set on winning a lady. To do so, he pressures the lady's cupbearer to win favor for the lord. There is no doubt that this kind of behavior is to be considered unbecoming of a noble. Konrad is quick to condemn this courtship-by-proxy as "bekrenken" (1507.2; betrayal). The cupbearer is thus made the lord's vassal "als sein ungetriuwer man" (1509.2; as his faithless retainer), betraying trust and true fealty "mit valschem rate" (1509.3; with false counsel). The lord's dishonorable conduct is made manifest by his cowardice and by suborning the lady's cupbearer.

Neither the lord nor the scheming cupbearer act in accordance with the conventions of chivalry and fealty, respectively. In that sense, they are behaving contrary to established nature and are hence truly degenerate. The Lord of the White Rock is a classic degenerate in that he significantly deviates from – or is entirely lacking in – the defining characteristics of nobility. Likewise, the cup-bearer degenerates from his status with respect to the defining characteristics of fealty.

The second example of degeneracy is found in the later adventure of Schoiadis. The king of Pronias had refused his daughter's hand to a heathen intruder. In response, the heathen invaded the kingdom with a large army and "hât ez allez vertriben" (3435; expelled/killed all people). The heathen besieged the king and his family in the remaining castle and "daz hât der heiden [...] sich vermezzen" (3438–40; he did so impudently) demanding that the king surrender his daughter. Gauriel and his companion knights offer to relieve the besieged. The heathen's warriors avoid single combat, cowardly rushing "ie vier ûf einen" (3565; four against one). The heroes prevail, of course, and the heathen warriors are slain.

The unnamed heathen leader, in turn, makes his escape "ûf einen turn" (3596.1; to a tower). In cowardly despair, he "hete des lîbes sich begeben" (3624.1; considered taking his own life;). Finally, and in yet another indication of his cravenness, the heathen means to escape on the back of a magical, fire-breathing

dragon. Moreover, he plans to act in doing so “als er ê dicke hete getân” (3629; as he often had done before).

The catalog of the heathen invader’s iniquities is a lengthy and damnable one: intimidation, unfairness in battle, cowardice, and unbecoming despair, to name the most egregious ones. Even allowing for the fact that a heathen may play by a set of rules different from those of a chivalrous Christian knight, this heathen is most certainly ‘degenerate’ in his deviation from and betrayal of the ruling warrior type.

The episode also includes a significant addition to Konrad’s usual, rather more perfunctory references to dragons and serpents. The heathen’s “angestlicher wurm” (3610; fearsome dragon) spews fire and an evil stench from its mouth. The heathen himself had created the dragon through “grôzen zoubersachen” (3612; powerful magic). The heathen has control over the dragon as a means of escape. Finally, the ring that Gauriel’s beloved had given him for protection effects its power: the dragon “zerstoup als ein mist” (3643; crumbled to dust).

The matter of degeneracy is not always clear-cut, however. Jôvan, the lord of the accursed forest, behaved in a degenerate manner when he abducted the daughter of the Count of Asterian: “die juncvrouwen vuorte er dâ hin” (3938; he abducted the maiden). Gauriel had himself taken a handmaiden hostage; but it was clear that this was meant to challenge Arthur’s finest knights to combat, according to the terms imposed by Gauriel’s lady. Konrad offers no such mitigation for Jôvan, whose only justification is to state peremptorily: “ich bin hie her und der sî hât” (4339; I am lord here and have her). Once defeated, however, Jôvan accepts surrender, offers parole, and agrees to return the maiden to Arthur’s castle “und sich selbe gevangen” (4361; with himself as captive). Finally, Jôvan “vuorte sie ûf sîn veste / und enpfienç vil schône die geste” (4367–68; led them to his castle and hosted the guests admirably). By his demeanor and deference in defeat, Jôvan shows that he is of noble temperament, whatever his motive for the abduction may have been.<sup>46</sup>

Konrad has thus included an impressive number and variety of imaginative creatures in his tale. Reference to such monsters, grotesques, and other marvels are not original *per se* by the time Konrad composed the story of Gauriel, his demi-goddess lady, and the series of adventures against, and later accompanied by well-known Arthurian knights. In other words, much of what Konrad related was already part of an established tradition and hence of a common, collective

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<sup>46</sup> Since the whole adventure takes place in the ‘accursed forest,’ it is plausible that Konrad included the bison riding lord and his magical realm merely to put into play the protective powers of the ring and salamander skin that Gauriel and his companions were given.

memory. This raises, finally, the issue of the relationship between memory and imagination, which has much to do with the way in which we evaluate originality and its impact on aesthetic judgment. For some key insights into the relationship between memory and imagination, I would like to turn briefly to neuroscience.

Modern neuroscience has added immeasurably to our understanding of the mechanics underlying the brain's unique ability to generate – and separate – reality and the imaginative fantasy or confabulation. This ability and its implications for the creative imagination have grown into one of the most fruitful areas of neuroscientific research.

In 2007, the journal *Science* listed among its selection of the year's top 10 stories the neuropsychological studies of memory and imagination.<sup>47</sup> Among the important findings of this research was what one reviewer summarized as the “striking overlap in the brain activity associated with remembering actual past experiences and imagining or simulating possible future experiences.”<sup>48</sup>

The brain's so-called default mode network<sup>49</sup> has moreover been found to be the fundamental basis of both memory and creative imagination. As the author of one study put it: “The construction process, the ability to flexibly recombine stored information in novel ways, in conjunction with evaluation functions attuned to assess fitness and possibly mediated in some instances by the emotional system [...], arguably sits near the apex of human intellectual abilities.”<sup>50</sup>

A persuasive distinction has been proposed between the aesthetic experience, or state of mind, and aesthetic preference, which involves judgment and valuation. Aesthetic expertise, the argument goes, affects aesthetic preference

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<sup>47</sup> “The Runners-Up,” *Science* (December 21, 2007): 1844–49; here 1848–49. Online source: <https://science.sciencemag.org/content/sci/318/5858/1844.1.full.pdf> (last accessed on Dec. 8, 2019).

<sup>48</sup> Daniel L. Schacter, “The Future of Memory: Remembering, Imagining, and the Brain,” *Neuron* 76 (November 21, 2012): 677–94; here 677.

<sup>49</sup> The Default Mode Network (DMN) refers to large-scale, interactive parts of the brain that are involved in introspective processes. The term was coined in Marcus E. Raichle, Ann Mary MacLeod, A. Z. Snyder, W. J. Powers, D. A. Gusnard and G. L. Shulman, “A Default Mode of Brain Function,” *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America* 98.2 (2001): 676–82. The aesthetic implications of the DMN are explored in Edward A. Vessel, Ayse Ilkai Isik, Amy M Belfi, Jonathan L Stahl, and G. Gabrielle Starr, “The Default-Mode Network Represents Aesthetic Appeal that Generalizes Across Visual Domains,” *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America* 116.38 (2019): 19155–64.

<sup>50</sup> Demis Hassabis and Eleanor A. Maguire, “The Constructive System of the Brain,” *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society B: Biological Sciences* 364.1521 (2009): 1263–71; here 1269.

but not necessarily aesthetic experience.<sup>51</sup> In the study of philology, literary history and criticism, documentation of sources and precedents is a critical element of aesthetic expertise; but it can also influence adversely an aesthetic valuation that is based too much on assessing originality.

Both author and reader are at some level engaged in the aesthetic, generative process of imagination. The psychologist Slobodan Marcović distinguished three levels of the aesthetic experience. First, aesthetic fascination, characterized by high levels of arousal, absorption in attentional focus and a sense of loss of time. Second, aesthetic appraisal or cognitive engagement which allows one to transcend generic uses of meaning. Finally, third, aesthetic emotions, which give rise to feelings of unity and connectedness with the object of aesthetic fascination and appraisal.<sup>52</sup>

Every author is at some level mindful of the aesthetic response he or she wishes to elicit, as well as the various means available to achieve that goal. The imagined reader is as much a part of the author's imaginative process as the artifactual or performative product of that same imagination. Again, it is useful to bear in mind the critical role that learned, or 'social,' and experiential memory play in human imagination in general, and the aesthetic imagination in particular.<sup>53</sup> Put simply: we humans do not as a rule make things up out of nothing, i.e., without the input from experiential and/or learned memories.

Neuroscience largely complements aesthetic evaluation of sources and products of imagination by allowing us important insights into how, and where, the brain constructs the objects of imagination. When we speak of a 'medieval' imagination in these purely functional terms, we might well be relieved to know that the 'medieval' imagination as such is in no significant way different from our own when it comes to the mechanisms of the imaginative process.

That said, we can make a significant observation about imagination across time, space, and cultures. The more remains unknown, or unverifiable, about an individual's or the collective experiential universe, the more room there is for extrapolation, for 'imaginary' places and phenomena which are patently

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51 Jorien van Paasschen, Francesca Bacci and David P. Melcher, "The Influence of Art Expertise and Training on Emotion and Preference Ratings for Representational and Abstract Artworks," *Plos One* 10.8 (2015). Online at: <https://journals.plos.org/plosone/article?id=10.1371/journal.pone.0134241> (last accessed on Dec. 8, 2019).

52 Slobodan Marcović, "Components of Aesthetic Experience: Aesthetic Fascination, Aesthetic Appraisal, and Aesthetic Emotion," *i-Perception* 3 (2012): 1–17; here 3.

53 For a study of memory and authority in the Middle Ages, see Mary J. Carruthers, *The Book of Memory: A Study of Memory in Medieval Culture*. Cambridge Studies in Medieval Literature, 10 (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

‘incredible.’ The Roman historian, Tacitus, for example, created a thorough and differentiated collective ‘memory’ of the Germanic people. The fact that he himself based his descriptions of them on second-hand accounts did in no significant way detract from the ‘authority’ of the quasi-factual compendium of memories.

There are in this context three distinct options available to the artistic imagination: 1) to populate the unknown with known collective memories; 2) to populate the known with imaginary memories; 3) to populate the unknown with imaginary memories.

To the extent that a ‘primitive’ imagination is bound to and by a more limited experiential or learned set of memories of the ‘real’ world, its imaginative resources are perceived to be both more naïve and less tied to factual reality.

So, what is it in terms of content and process that Konrad’s imagination has actually accomplished here? In a sense, not much. To most scholars, and many of Konrad’s contemporary audience, the descriptions are familiar from any number of medieval illustrations. Scholars have recognized in Konrad’s procession of grotesques such creatures as the merfolk, Blemmyes, the Sciapods, and the wodewoses (wild men) that were a well-established part of the learned medieval memory. In his *Histories* (fifth century B.C.E.), Herodotus had already described many of these humanoid curiosities. Although they were not directly available as text in the Middle Ages, his descriptions of exotic peoples and regions were very much a part of medieval understanding of the *autremonde* and its denizens. The Ebstorf and Hereford ‘Mappa Mundi’, for example, illustrated a wide range of bizarre, exotic, fabulous, grotesque, mythological curiosities whose strangeness increased with distance from the center, Jerusalem.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> See Asa Simon Mittman, *Maps and Monsters in Medieval England*. Studies in Medieval History and Culture (New York: Routledge, 2006). See also Naomi Reed Kline, “Maps, Monsters and Misericords: From Creation to Apocalypse,” *Profane Arts of the Middle Ages* 11 (2003): 175–92. For a detailed discussion of the Hereford ‘Mappa Mundi,’ see Gabriel Alington, *The Hereford Mappa Mundi*. Grace Guides on British Heritage (Leominster, GB: Gracewing, 2000); here ch. 4. The Ebstorf map is discussed, for instance, in G. Pischke, “The Ebstorf Map: Tradition and Contents of a Medieval Picture of the World,” *History of Geo- and Space Sciences* 5 (2014): 155–61. For an Eastern perspective on the monsters in European art, see Partha Mitter, *Much Maligned Monsters: A History of European Reactions to Indian Art*, rev. ed. (1977; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992). On medieval myths about the East, see Rosa Furnari, “The Journey of Myths from West to East,” *Cogito* 6.4 (2014): 129–42. See also Kim M. Phillips, *Before Orientalism: Asian Peoples and Cultures in European Travel Writing, 1245–1510*. The Middle Ages Series (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014). On the relationship between the ‘Mappa Mundi’ and bestiaries, see Chet Van Duzer and Ilya Dines, “The Only Mappamundi in a Bestiary Context: Cambridge, MS Fitzwilliam 254,” *Imago Mundi* 58.1 (2006): 7–22. See also Albrecht Classen’s Introduction to this volume, with more references and comments on the *mappae mundi*. Cf. also the ninth chapter in his book, *Tracing*



Konrad's imagination rests largely on (re)combining elements from memory, both collective and individual. In so doing, he seeks to add elements in a novel context to achieve an aesthetic effect that appeals to both familiarity and surprise. Konrad's merfolk have artisan skills applied in distinctly anthropocentric ways to make fine furnishings. Some of his grotesque creatures are singled out for having the capacity of introspection in that they are aware of their abnormal nature and react to it emotionally, i.e., they are ill-at-ease with and in their own bodies. Gauriel's heraldic companion is imbued with no less fierce loyalty and bravery than Iwein's well-known lion. A bison can be tamed to carry the weight of an abnormally large man. A heathen's dragon does not merely exist *sui generis*: it has been created by magic and trained to serve a human purpose as means of escape. In this context, many of Konrad's monsters and marvelous grotesques have stepped from the forbidding margins into the world of the court and its denizens.

Given the number and ubiquity of the monsters, grotesques, and other marvels that punctuate Konrad's late Arthurian tale, the question arises to what extent there is evidence of an 'original' or 'novel' imagination. Most of Konrad's creatures are invoked and inserted without contour or distinguishing attributes. Others, like the artisan merfolk, may claim some degree of novelty. In the end, however, we run the risk of making aesthetic valuations and judgments based on restrictive criteria like derivativeness or paucity of imagination. Such criteria are highly restrictive, and they often do not consider the critical role that memory plays in imagination, as the psychologist Morris Stein argued in an early discussion of novelty: "By 'novelty' I mean that the creative product did not exist previously in precisely the same form. It arises from a *reintegration* of already existing materials and knowledge, but when it is completed it contains elements that are new."<sup>55</sup> The products and processes of imagination do not exist in a vacuum. They are inextricably linked to the interplay between experiential and collective, learned memory.

We can demonstrate, here as elsewhere, by source evidence and attestation that Konrad did not 'create' these creatures, plot elements, names, or narrative building blocks from his own imagination. It would be unfair, however, to dismiss Konrad as an unimaginative, derivative hack. In doing so, we would ignore the fundamental importance of the complex interplay and overlap of learned and experienced memory in the construction of 'novel' thought. By the time *Gauriel* was

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*the Trails in the Medieval World: Epistemological Explorations, Orientation, and Mapping in Medieval Literature*. Routledge Studies in Medieval Literature and Culture (New York and London: Routledge, forthcoming).

55 Morris I. Stein, "Creativity and Culture," *The Journal of Psychology* 36 (1953): 311–22; here 311.

composed, the pool of collective memories from which Konrad could draw images consciously and subconsciously, deliberately and spontaneously, was remarkably wide and deep. Hence, I hope to have made a case for a more nuanced way to understand and apply the criterion of imagination as it applies to artists, works, and cultures from other periods all over the world, especially because Konrad's case serves so well to illustrate the continuity and tradition of monstrous imagination along with the creativity resulting from each iteration.<sup>56</sup>

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**56** We could easily extend this perspective to other cultures and literatures where similar approaches to the monstrous in global imaginary terms can be identified, such as in the Iranian national epic, the *Shāhnāmah* (*Book of Kings*) of Firdawsi (d. 1019 or 1025). See the contribution to this volume by Robert Landau Ames.

Filip Hrbek

# Fantastic Places, Objects, and Creatures in Fourteenth-Century Czech-Language Literature: Imagination During the Reign of the Luxembourg Dynasty

## Introduction – Literacy in Fourteenth-Century Bohemia

Before we proceed to investigate the relevance of imagination in late medieval Czech-language literature, which is the main subject of this study, we must answer one basic question first – who was a reader or listener of these kinds of narratives in fourteenth-century Bohemia? The answer to this question lies hidden in the problematic nature of literacy and education in Bohemia, which we must at least address briefly before we move further to the main subject of this study.<sup>1</sup>

Despite widespread misconceptions about this, the level of basic literacy in Bohemia improved steadily from the first half of the thirteenth century onwards. The first reason for this was the changes among the clergy in Bohemia. From the second third of that century the clerics in Bohemia were pushed harder into observing celibacy.<sup>2</sup> This resulted in fewer children from clerics attending school from this time on; hence the children of parish priests, who were previously in fact the only group attending lower schools in regal towns and villages, made room for children of members of the lower nobility or burghers. This made education accessible to members of a wider range of social classes. Similar processes had already taken place in the Holy Roman Empire or western Europe, but the

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<sup>1</sup> Writing of this study was enabled thanks to the grant (number UJEP-SGS-2017-63-005-3) from the University of J. E. Purkyně in Ústí nad Labem. At this point I also want to thank to all the people who helped me with this study. I thank all three translators from Czech to English. But most of all I would like to express my gratitude to University Distinguished Professor Albrecht Classen – without his immense help and consultations this study wouldn't exist.

<sup>2</sup> See Nora Berend, Przemysław Urbańczyk, and Przemysław Wiszniewski, *Central Europe in the High Middle Ages: Bohemia, Hungary and Poland, c. 1000–1350* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 474.

cultural development in Bohemia lagged behind the pace of medieval western Europe.<sup>3</sup> This fact must be kept in mind for the rest of this study.

The second reason for the relatively high demand for at least basic literacy was the unstoppable development of the economy. Throughout the fourteenth century there was a swift growth in production and development from simple forms of mostly local trade toward advanced forms of national and international trade and markets (e.g., bank accounts, loans, and credit), which all required book-keeping, reading, writing, and arithmetic. This forced not only noblemen, but also craftsmen, merchants, and burghers to adapt to this situation and master at least a basic knowledge of literacy.<sup>4</sup> Moreover, we should not forget to mention clerks and notaries, who, together with the children of leading burghers of regal towns, were also required to master writing and reading at quite a high level.

Despite the growing level of literacy, there was one major obstacle in the widespread consumption of books, their exorbitant price. Only the richest of the rich were able to acquire a manuscript. And for this very reason, authors of stories written in the fourteenth century and analyzed in this study designed their texts for reading out aloud – a very common phenomenon throughout the Middle Ages.<sup>5</sup>

And who were these authors? Predominantly these were priests associated with cathedral chapters, friars, and later also professors and students at colleges and lower schools, or lay poets and entertainers living at the residences of noblemen or at the king's court itself.<sup>6</sup> In particular, the court of the Bohemian King Wenceslaus II with its many poets (e.g., minnesingers) and men of letters (instead of former jesters) must be mentioned here as an important factor.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>3</sup> E.g., probably the oldest medieval town with privileges in the modern-day Czech Republic is Bruntál with privileges granted by King Přemysl Otakar I in the year 1213.

<sup>4</sup> See Berend, Urbańczyk and Wiszniewski, *Central Europe in the High Middle Ages* (see note 2), 475; and František Šmahel, *Mezi středověkem a renesancí* (Prague: Argo, 2002), 61.

<sup>5</sup> The issue of literacy, groups of readers, and reading aloud in the Middle Ages is very complex and therefore it is not my intention to analyze it here in depth. But a very good summary of this topic for the region of East Central Europe is offered by Anna Adamska, "The Study of Medieval Literacy: Old Sources, New Ideas," *The Development of Literate Mentalities in East Central Europe*, ed. eadem and Marco Mostert. Utrecht Studies in Medieval Literacy, 9 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2004), 13–47; here 29–31.

<sup>6</sup> Pavel Spunar, "Spisovatelé – vzdělanci – básníci," *Člověk českého středověku*, ed. Martin Nodl and František Šmahel, *Každodenní život*, 14 (Prague: Argo, 2002), 285–308; here 286–87.

<sup>7</sup> See, e.g., Dana Dvořáková-Malá, *Královský dvůr Václava II.* (České Budějovice: Veduta, 2011), or David Sychra, "Středohornoněmecká lyrika a epika na dvoře posledních Přemyslovců jako pramen k interpretaci panovnického ideálu 13. století v českých zemích," *Historica: Revue pro historii a příbuzné vědy* 1 (2017): 1–19.

## Chivalric Literature in Bohemia

Czech medieval literature was, even in the case of chivalric romances, written in three languages – Latin, German, and Czech. Each of these three language groups had its own primary audience, even though there is no doubt as to the bilingual (even trilingual) abilities of certain intellectuals or scholars in medieval Bohemia.<sup>8</sup> Latin was the domain of the most educated intellectuals and clerics. The German language, due to the close connection of the Czech kingdom with the German territory, was an integral part of the life of old patrician families, merchants, councilors, diplomats – all of whom were looking beyond the borders of Bohemia.<sup>9</sup> Czech remained the language of the ordinary residents of towns and villages, craftsmen, peasants, farmers, lower aristocrats, so it remained the language of those who wanted to address the majority of the population or gain its attention or favor.<sup>10</sup> In this regard, it is important to mention Czech reformers in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, who were able to excite the crowds and eventually the whole country during the Hussite wars with their passionate sermons bashing the current morals of the Church.<sup>11</sup>

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**8** For basic comment about the social structure of regal towns in medieval Bohemia, see, e.g., Tomáš Borovský, “Měšťan,” *Člověk českého středověku*, ed. Martin Nodl and František Šmahel, *Každodenní život*, 14 (Prague: Argo, 2002), 392–412; here 400–03. As to multilingualism in the Middle Ages, also in Bohemia, see the contributions to *Multilingualism in the Middle Ages and Early Modern Age: Communication and Miscommunication in the Premodern World*, ed. Albrecht Classen, *Fundamentals of Medieval and Early Modern Culture*, 17 (Berlin and Boston: Walter de Gruyter, 2016).

**9** For general observations, see, e.g., Peter Wapnewski, *Deutsche Literatur des Mittelalters* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1990), especially the chapter regarding literature in the times of the Hohenstaufen dynasty (1150–1250) and the chapter concerning the literature of the late Middle Ages (1250–1500), 39–109. For more recent publications, see, e.g., Marion E. Gibbs and Sidney M. Johnson, *Medieval German Literature* (New York: Routledge, 2000), especially Part IV, 97–219 and Part VI, 304–415.

**10** Spunar, “Spisovatelé – vzdělanci – básníci” (see note 6), 285–86.

**11** For Jan Hus and a summary of the Hussite revolution, see Thomas A. Fudge, *Jan Hus: Religious Reform and Social Revolution in Bohemia* (London and New York: I. B. Tauris, 2010), 9–18, 57–73, 75–94, and 147–73. For the role of Jan Hus’s teaching in the spreading of vernacular literature in Bohemia among his followers, and for the rate of expansion of vernacular production in Bohemia at the turn of the fourteenth to the fifteenth century, see Marcela K. Perett, *Preachers, Partisans, and Rebellious Religion*. The Middle Ages Series (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2018), 1–19, 59–142, and, most importantly, 166–91 and 215–26. For a comprehensive analysis, see Lenka Bobková and Milena Bartlová, *Velké dějiny země Koruny české*, vol. IVb: 1310–1402 (Prague and Litomyšl: Paseka, 2003); and Petr Čornej, *Velké dějiny země Koruny české*, vol. V: 1402–1437 (Prague and Litomyšl: Paseka, 2010).

A certain exception to the abovementioned selection of languages by the various members of inhabitants were minnesingers and writers of narrative texts. These authors were advocates of their own language and culture in the larger context of Czech society,<sup>12</sup> or they were domestic authors writing or composing in their mother tongue, with which they planned to reach the majority of the Czech-speaking population<sup>13</sup> – just as the Czech Church reformers and Church authors did. The greatest demand for courtly literature in Czech grew mainly at the time of reign of Charles IV (1346–1378) and then of his son Wenceslaus IV (1378–1419).<sup>14</sup> This kind of literature was, in most respects, something new for Czech society, and therefore its authors could not pick up the threads of an older domestic tradition from their own language. For that reason, authors of Czech court literature were utilizing, adapting, and treating topics, moral attitudes, and ideals similar to those that had already been appearing for a while in the medieval West.<sup>15</sup>

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**12** See *Deutsche Literatur des Mittelalters in Böhmen und über Böhmen: Vorträge der internationalen Tagung, veranstaltet vom Institut für Germanistik der Pädagogischen Fakultät der Südböhmischen Universität České Budějovice. České Budějovice, 8. bis 11. September 1999*, ed. Dominique Flieger and Václav Bok. *Schriften zur Mediävistik*, 2 (Vienna: Edition Praesens, 2001), mainly 33–61, 81–167, 205–24, 247–84, and 301–42; see also Spunar, “Spisovatelé – vzdělanci – básníci” (see note 6), 295.

**13** Spunar, “Spisovatelé – vzdělanci – básníci” (see note 6), 286.

**14** The confirmation of this claim can be found here: Jiří Hošna, “Zamyšlení nad hrdinským a rytířským eposem,” *Česká literatura* 34 (1986): 164–67. See also Harrison Thompson, “Learning at the Court of Charles IV,” *Speculum* 25.1 (1950): 1–20; or much more recently, the contributions to *Prag und die großen Kulturzentren Europas in der Zeit der Luxemburger*, ed. Markéta Jarošová, Jiří Kuthan, and Stefan Scholz. *Opera Facultatis Theologiae catholicae Universitatis Carolinae Pragensis. Historia et historia artium*, 8 (Prague: Togga, 2008); or *Schriften im Umkreis mitteleuropäischer Universitäten um 1400. Lateinische und volkssprachige Texte aus Prag, Wien und Heidelberg*, ed. Fritz Peter Knapp, Jürgen Miethke, and Manuela Niesner. *Education and Society in the Middle Ages and Renaissance*, 20 (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2004); or Josef Hrabák, “Význam Karla IV. pro rozvoj české literatury,” *Česká literatura* 26.6 (1978): 481–90. For a comparison of the evolved court literature during the reign of Charles IV with the first courtly and chivalric literature in Bohemia at the court of Wenceslaus II, see Sychra, “Středohornoněmecká lyrika a epika na dvoře posledních Přemyslovců” (see note 7), 1–19.

**15** See below in this study, e.g.; the story of Duke Ernst stresses several trends typical for contemporary society of Latin western Europe – the ideal of an educated ruler; deliberation of the moral values of rulers’ decisions; receiving forgiveness by joining the crusade; incorporating local religious traditions into the story; and the power of maternal love. In the story of Tandarias, Dietrich, and Bruncvik, different trends are stressed: setting out on the adventurous journey just to forget emotional suffering caused by forbidden love; or to show boundless courage; or setting out on the adventurous expedition just to acquire honor. For the weak reception of the ideal of a strong and educated ruler in the courts of the last Přemyslids, see Sychra, “Středohornoněmecká lyrika a epika na dvoře posledních Přemyslovců” (see note 7), 1–19.

From the twelfth century onwards, it is possible to discover two basic literary discourses in the evolution of Czech narrative literature. One of them was more, but not entirely, connected to historical reality and historical topics.<sup>16</sup> The other was characterized by using a large number of fantastic motifs. Its aim was to catch the listener's or reader's<sup>17</sup> attention and to offer an attractive narrative based on an adventurous story reflecting popular imagination.<sup>18</sup>

In this study, I will specifically explore this second tendency in medieval Czech literature of the fourteenth century when poets were trying to offer adventurous stories full of fantastic places, objects, and creatures to the widest

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**16** In the *Alexandreis*, e.g., there are no fantastic themes and the story is based on a real historical character (Alexander the Great in European literature; King Přemysl Otakar II in Czech literature); another text, e.g., would be Ulrich von Etzenbach's *Wilhelm von Wenden*; or Dietrich von Freiberg's *Die Ritterfahrt Johannis von Michelsberg*. See Lenka Bobková, *Jan Lucemburský: Otec slavného syna* (Prague: Vyšehrad, 2018), 401.

**17** It is crucial for this study to remind ourselves once again that in the high Middle Ages the habit of reading aloud was still widely practiced. As evidence, in Czech language we can consider the frequent use of direct speech, repeating certain apostrophes, rhetorical questions and exclamations, specific adjectives, adverbs, rhyme couples, sentences referring to Scripture, and generally sentences which stress the veracity of arguments and also of course, the dialogue form of the text itself. See Milan Kopecký, "O vztazích mezi rukopisnou a tištěnou literaturou," *Časopis moravského muzea Acta Musei Moraviae* 52 (1967): 341–51; here 342; or Dennis Howard Green, *Medieval Listening and Reading: The Primary Reception of German Literature 800–1300* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 3–19 and 61–112; or, more recently, *Orality and Literacy in the Middle Ages: Essays on a Conjunction and its Consequences in Honour of D. H. Green*, ed. Marc Chénia and Christopher Young. Utrecht Studies in Medieval Literacy, 12 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2005). There is no doubt that the medieval texts, which are the subject of this study, have a rather oral character, meant for reading aloud, which is supported by some of the exclamations mentioned in the individual texts, e.g., "jakož uslyšíte," "jakž tuto uslyšíte," to "ještě slyš," or "Tu tato řeč mluvení přesta," and are most frequent in the first three texts of this study. It is not possible to translate properly these exclamations into English, because they are in old Czech. But if we try they would be something like "as you will hear," "here this you will hear," "hear also this," or "Here this my speech ends," which all denotes that the text was read aloud. These exclamations are meant as a foothold for the story-teller or a speaker and were supposed to help him/her to remember the text more easily. These phrases can be also found in Czech-language prints as recent as the sixteenth century; see, for example, Filip Hrbek, "Mudrování při žejdlíčkách: morové traktáty lékařů, 'přelátů' a humanistů v předbělohorské době," *rigorosum* thesis defended at Faculty of Arts, Univerzita J. E. Purkyně v Ústí nad Labem, 2014, 2.

**18** *Rytířské srdce majice: česká rytířská epika 14. století*, ed. Eduard Petrů and Dagmar Marečková. Živá díla minulosti, 96 (Prague: Odeon, 1984), 7–8.

possible audience<sup>19</sup> of readers and listeners. In comparison with the same type of work in the Latin West, this Czech literature of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries was dominated – except for the rhymed *Alexandreida* – by narrative texts which served mostly entertainment, instead of aiming at moralistic-didactic teaching.<sup>20</sup> Adventurous events and fantastic motives of this entertainment literature are considered to be the main characteristics of the narratives of this period in Bohemia. This also distinguishes them from the older type of the Slavic heroic epic of the early Middle Ages, which was much more strongly connected to historic everyday reality.<sup>21</sup>

## Analysis of Individual Czech-Language Narratives

The subject of this paper are the Czech-language narratives texts written in the fourteenth century under the influence of older foreign (German) templates. These analyzed texts are rhymed as well as written in prose. All of these texts became so popular among the Czech literary world that they were repeatedly published all the way up to modern times – whether in slightly altered versions or as stories inspired by the original texts – and some of their themes and motives became a permanent part of the collective imagination of the Czech culture.<sup>22</sup> My aim is to demonstrate which fantastic places, objects, and creatures became known in the medieval Czech-speaking society and therefore demonstrate that the inhabitants of the Czech kingdom during the Luxemburg reign belonged to the Latin West world not only politically but also culturally as mirrored by the fundamental concepts of imagination, to some extent influenced by the chivalric epic originally composed in regions far away from the boundaries of the Czech lands.

I focus on four Czech texts in this study, three of them rhymed, one in prose.<sup>23</sup> They were popular in Bohemia, as documented by the existence of

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**19** I mean “widest possible audience” in the use of Czech language rather than Latin, used by intellectuals, or German, predominantly used by higher social classes. See above in this study.

**20** Apart from this difference in the preference of their main motifs, they belonged, from a literary point of view, to the same genre. *Rytířské srdce majíce* (see note 18), 8, et passim.

**21** Hošna, “Zamyšlení nad hrdinským a rytířským eposem” (see note 14), 162.

**22** For examples of old Czech legends written in nineteenth-century Bohemia, see the most recent new edition by Alois Jirásek, *Staré pověsti české* (Prague: Knižní klub, 2018), 131–44 (Brunčvík), 256–59 (adaptation of the theme of Laurin’s rose garden). I will turn to more details below.

**23** I used modern editions of manuscripts in this study. The edition of *Duke Ernst* was prepared by Eduard Petrů; the editions of *Dietrich von Bern* and *Tandarias and Floribell* by Eduard



their manuscripts even from long after the end of the Hussite wars.<sup>24</sup> Their popularity in medieval times made it possible for some of their motifs to later make their way into urban entertainment literature, as well as folk literature, and to widen their appeal beyond the higher classes of medieval society to whom they were originally addressed.<sup>25</sup> This spreading of themes and stories of courtly narrative literature among the lower classes was commonly caused by a later circulation<sup>26</sup> of the court literature itself into Czech society. At the time these texts originated, knights – those of the aristocracy trained mainly to fight in battles – didn't exist in Czech society anymore. They were gradually replaced by aristocrats making a living rather from business or serving in the administration than fighting, and also by burghers, courtiers, and merchants.<sup>27</sup> This resulted in a phenomenon where readers and listeners apparently no longer insisted on

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Petrů and Dagmar Marečková; for all three, see *Rytířské srdce*, ed. Petrů and Marečková (see note 18). The edition of *Chronicle of Bruncvik* was prepared by Jaroslav Kolár and Milada Nedvěďová; see *Próza českého středověku*, ed. Milada Nedvěďová and Jaroslav Kolár. *Živá díla minulosti*, 95 (Prague: Odeon, 1983).

**24** *Rytířské srdce majíce* (see note 18), 11.

**25** If these stories had not been popular among the lower classes, they would not have become part of urban entertainment literature and folk literature in the subsequent centuries; see note 22; and Albrecht Classen, *The German Volksbuch: A Critical History of a Late-medieval Genre*. Studies in German Language and Literature, 15 (Lewiston: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1995; rpt. 1999); and Jiří Koteš, "Time and Space in Late-Medieval Dynastic Chronicles: With a Focus on Examples from Czech-Language Literature," *Travel, Time, and Space in the Middle Ages and Early Modern Time: Explorations of World Perceptions and Processes of Identity Formation*, ed. Albrecht Classen. Fundamentals of Medieval and Early Modern Culture, 22, (Berlin and Boston: Walter de Gruyter, 2018), 446–63.

**26** "Later" in the sense of comparing the society in Bohemia with the society in the medieval Latin western Europe, where the social evolution was much faster than in Czech lands. See, for example, the problematics of separation of the Church from the state power of the Czech kingdom in the year 1221 by the so-called Great Privilege to the Church (Vratislav Vaníček, *Velké dějiny zemí Koruny české*, vol. II: 1197–1250 [Prague and Litomyšl: Paseka, 2000], 133–45) and the Concordat of Worms in the Holy Roman Empire which was trying to settle almost the same problem already in the year 1122; see "The Investiture Controversy," *Sources in Medieval Culture and History*, ed. Kay Brainerd Slocum (Boston: Prentice Hall, 2010), 170–75.

**27** There is even an opinion between some historians that knights in a sense of social status of pure medieval fighters didn't exist in the Middle Ages in Bohemia, because before such a social class was able to fully evolve, it was replaced by aristocrats doing business, by burghers, etc. Even emperor Charles IV wasn't able to prepare crusades, as he was reluctant to waste the lives of highly-valued and wealthy aristocrats who were of much more value to him than an "ordinary knight." See, e.g., Otakar Sklenář, "Vévoda Arnošt a jeho dvojí výprava ke kyperskému hradu," *Studia Minora Facultatis Philosophicae Universitatis Brunensis*: 5.8 (2005): 29–44; here 42–43, where Sklenář mentions also Iwańczak Wojciech, *Po stopách rytířských příběhů* (Prague: Argo, 2001).

ideals connected to the deteriorating status of the knightly class,<sup>28</sup> but rather on attractive stories with fantastic features.<sup>29</sup> This is how these stories entered the collective imagination of the whole Czech society from the late Middle Ages all the way up to today.

### **Duke Ernst (Vévoda Arnošt)**

The first of the texts to be examined here is *Duke Ernst*.<sup>30</sup> The Czech version from the second half of the fourteenth century is probably based on its Middle High German version (lost) dated at the turn of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.<sup>31</sup> This version itself was based on a manuscript dated at the beginning of the thirteenth century, probably 1220. But this thirteenth-century Middle High German template is by far not the oldest version of the story, which is preserved in a fragment from around 1170/1180.<sup>32</sup> Adelaide, mother of Duke Ernst, ruler of Bavaria, accepts the proposition by Emperor Otto and marries him.<sup>33</sup> Ernst, however, becomes a target of slander that is being spread by the emperor's nephew. The slander in fact suggests that Ernst wants to kill the emperor and usurp his throne. Otto himself finally succumbs to the slander and invades Ernst's lands to suppress this attempted *coup d'état* (849–970). A great domestic war breaks out during which many cities are besieged – Nuremberg, Speyer, and Regensburg – and numerous battles take place (1010–893). Many years of war take their heavy toll on the land and its people who suffer enormously. Finally, in order to save Bavaria from the revenge of the emperor, Ernst gives up, leaves his country, and goes on a crusade (2058–87).

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28 As to this problematic issue in medieval east central Europe, see Wojciech Iwańczak, *Po stopách rytířských příběhů* (Prague: Argo, 2001).

29 *Rytířské srdce majíce* (see note 18), 12.

30 In the Czech version the Duke Ernst is called by the Czech name: “Arnošt.” But in this study I prefer to use the German and English version of his name: “Ernst.” The edition with which I worked comes from the manuscript deposited in National Library of Warsaw – Biblioteka Narodowa, Biblioteka Baworowskich (Baw. 990), sign. Rps 12594 II, folio 66b–150b.

31 *Rytířské srdce majíce* (see note 18), 9. We can assume that such a version had to exist because the German version from ca. 1220 differs from it by its structure (spaces, etc.) compared with the Czech version.

32 Albrecht Classen, *Water in Medieval Literature: An Ecocritical Reading*. Ecocritical Theory and Practice (Lanham, MD, Boulder, CO, et al.: Lexington Books, 2018), 54.

33 “Vévoda Arnošt,” *Rytířské srdce majíce* (see note 18), verses 495–505.

During the crusade he overcomes many obstacles and visits fantastic places and countries. He visits Constantinople where he sings the song “*Hospodine pomiluj ny*” (2164–282). Cyprus with its golden castle, spa, and magic tables full of food and drinks is where he tries to rescue a kidnapped Indian princess from the clutches of the crane people (2389–3665).<sup>34</sup> Subsequently, he gets trapped on an island with a magnetic mountain where almost all members of his party die of starvation and the rest survive only by pretending they are food for the mythical creature *Roc*, who seeing them as such, takes them away from the island (3700–4040). After that, Ernst and his party sail their rafts through a mountain made of diamonds and obtain one of them (4080–215). Then they reach a land called *Arimaspia* where they enter the service of its ruler. During this time, Ernst experiences several wars with neighboring nations or tribes (4215–830).<sup>35</sup> The last adventure Ernst undertakes before reaching the goal of his original crusade for the Holy Grave is his entrance into the service of the king of *Ubian* (4920–5460),<sup>36</sup> whom Ernst previously defeated. During this time, Ernst defeats the pagans of Babylon and joins again the defeated side just because he wants to get closer to the Holy Land (5465–550). Ernst then reaches the actual destination of his journey and takes his crusade to a final defeat of pagans (not explicitly Muslims) by the Holy Grave (5550–93).

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34 We can find a beautiful illustration of these kinds of creatures in the *Nuremberg Chronicle* of Hartmann Schedel (1493) also with explanation and description from different sources in Claude Kappler, *Monstres, Démones et Merveilles a la fin du Moyen Age* (Paris: Payot, 1980), 149–51.

35 “The Arimaspians” – probably a deformation of Greek “*Arimaspoi*,” which was a Greek name for the mythical nation of Scythians. Members of this nation were, according to the legends, only one-eyed and lived in the North around the Urals. See *Rytířské srdce majíce* (see note 18), 330. According to the semi-legendary Greek poet Aristeas, the Arimaspi were one-eyed nomads who mine the region between the Black Sea and Mongolia for its rich gold deposits. Aristeas describes them in his work called *Arimaspea*, where he has written down his travels to the Central Asian region. Aristeas’s travelogue was very popular and inspired works about mythical races during the following centuries. See Stephen T. Asma, *On Monsters: An Unnatural History of Our Worst Fears* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 27–30, 80.

36 “*The Ubii or Ubians*” were originally members of a Germanic tribe in the region of nowadays Cologne in Germany. See Theo Vennemann, “Ein Ubisches Lautgesetz,” *Beiträge zur Geschichte der deutschen Sprache und Literatur* 115 (1993): 367–99. In relation to this story we can presume that the appearance of the Ubii could be explained as a secondary reference to the hypothetical small and not long existing state founded by the participants of the Crusade in the region of the Near East after having captured Jerusalem in 1099. Such a state could bear the name of the former Germanic inhabitants of the part of Germany from where the crusaders came. The Ubii are in fact Christians in the story of Duke Ernst. Such a thing could be known to the former German author of the story and used as a symbolic feature and clarification of Christian presence in the Near East. *Rytířské srdce majíce* (see note 18), 330.

Finally, Ernst returns, via Bari in Italy, to Bamberg in Germany where he makes peace with the emperor and takes back his own reign in Bavaria (5729–6087). Furthermore, he gives him a huge gemstone called “orphan,” which is then set into the emperor’s crown (6059–70).

During this journey, Ernst experiences a number of friendly as well as unfriendly encounters with various forms of people and creatures. First, it is a Christian Indian princess whom he tries to rescue from the captivity of the Nose people, likened to cranes (birds). He is then carried from the magnetic mountain by a bird called *The Roc*. In *Arimaspia* he serves the *Cyclops* whom he calls *Tygropides*. In their name he then defeats the *Blatfuzes*, also called *Skiopodes* or *Monopods*, the Ear people – *Panotti* or *Phanesii* or *Panotioi* in Greek, and a tribe of giants – and on the other hand saves the *Pygmies*.<sup>37</sup> He finally hands over one of the Ear people and one of the *Pygmies* to the emperor in Bamberg and lets one of the giants who served him at the end of his journey be baptized so that he can enter a local monastery (6015–59).

The Czech version differs from the German original by changes in the text itself as well as by its structure. It puts the political struggle into the background and creates more space for the crusade and the fantasy elements. The text was incredibly popular and has been adapted from the last quarter of the twelfth century all the way to the end of the fifteenth century.<sup>38</sup> The character of Duke Ernst is inspired by Duke Ernst II (1007–1030) of Swabia. The emperor and the empress were probably based on Otto I the Great and his wife Adelaide, widow of the Italian King, Lothar.

### ***Dietrich von Bern (Jetřich Berúnský)***

The second text is about the heroic deeds of Dietrich von Bern,<sup>39</sup> historically Theodoricus de Verona or Theodoric the Great (475–526 C.E.).<sup>40</sup> Dietrich is a

<sup>37</sup> See the similarity with the list of creatures in the travelogue by John Mandeville; see further in this study.

<sup>38</sup> *Rytířské srdce majíce* (see note 18), 9.

<sup>39</sup> In the Czech version, Dietrich von Bern is of course called by his Czech name: “Jetřich Berúnský.” But in this study, I keep to the German and English version of his name: “Dietrich von Bern.” The edition with which I worked in this study comes from the manuscript housed in the National Library of Warsaw – Biblioteka Narodowa, Biblioteka Baworowskich (Baw. 990), sign. Rps 12594 II, folio 176b–206b.

<sup>40</sup> For the historical Theoderic the Great, see “Theoderic the Great,” John Middleton, *World Monarchies and Dynasties* (London: Routledge, 2015), 936–37. However, there is also a possibility that the story of Dietrich reflects more accurately the political situation under the reign

fearless knight, who finds out that a haughty dwarf named Laurin punishes any intruders into his rose garden by cutting off their arms and legs. Laurin's garden is surrounded by a silk thread and is full of the most wonderful flowers.<sup>41</sup> Dietrich cannot resist the urge to defeat Laurin and decides to punish him for attacking the intruders of his garden (150–80).<sup>42</sup> He manages to locate Laurin's garden and discovers a remarkable rose which is embellished by gemstones and glows with light, as if it were daylight. As Dietrich enters the garden, he breaks the silk thread and the king of dwarfs appears in order to punish the intruder as he usually does (208–33).

The first to fight Laurin is Dietrich's most loyal fellow Witege, who is a son of the legendary Wayland the Smith. He is, however, quickly defeated and is then replaced by Dietrich himself just before being dismembered. There are many beautiful and magical objects in possession of Laurin that come forth in the fight that takes place – leopards accompanying their master, who wears a dragon skin armor; a crown with mechanical singing birds; a golden shield, which is proof against being pierced; a twelve-men-strength belt and an invisibility cloak allowing his owner to disappear just like Harry Potter, as in the books by J. K. Rowling (460–855).

Dietrich is finally victorious in this battle but he is so overcome by anger that there is a danger he might kill Laurin. Laurin is, however, defended by Dietrich's third fellow, Dietleib, because Laurin keeps his sister Krinhult (or Similde) in his underworld kingdom as his wife and the queen of dwarfs (855–1103). The fight between Dietrich and Dietleib is quickly settled and together with other members of their party, they become guests of Laurin in his hollow mountain full of fantastic objects (1200–529). However, after a great feast, Dietrich and his party are betrayed by Laurin, who in the meantime put on the ring with the strength of twelve men. Dietrich and his party have to fight their way out in order to save their own lives and that of Krinhult (1565–620). They are finally successful with the help of several magical objects and the help of Krinhult, who hides all of the light in the mountain with a magical gemstone (1620–30). Dietrich first melts his shackles with his breath and subsequently, together with his friends, uses the twelve-men strength ring and twelve-men strength belt, as well as rings that allow them to see in the dark and also the legendary swords Mimung and Naegling (1630–2020). Laurin's army,

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of Emperor Frederic II (1212–1250), as Norbert Voorwinden has shown in his analysis of two other stories about Dietrich, "Dietrich von Bern: Germanic Hero or Medieval King? On the Sources of Dietrichs Flucht and Rabenschlacht," *Neophilologus* 91.2 (2007): 243–59.

<sup>41</sup> "Jetřich Berúnský," *Rytřské srdce majice* (see note 18), verses 47–149.

<sup>42</sup> Originally these stories were inspired by an atmospheric phenomenon, which is typical of the Tyrolian region of the Alps, which causes the top of mountains to turn literally pink at sunset.

including giants, is defeated and he himself has to become a jester at the court of the victorious hero (2020–104).

At this point, it is appropriate to focus on the influence of Nordic and German sagas in this story. There is a character called Witege, who – according to legends – is the son of the legendary Wayland the Smith.<sup>43</sup> Wayland appears in the old sagas as a parallel character to Achilles and is also a legendary blacksmith. One of his creations is also the sword, Mimung that was forged from the excrement of geese who were fed with metal dust shaved from the best sword of Wayland. With the help of this sword, he defeated another legendary blacksmith called Amelias.<sup>44</sup> And it is Mimung that is in the possession of Witege who is represented in this story as Dietrich's loyal friend. Another sword mentioned in this story is called Naegling, and according to the sagas it is one of the three swords belonging to Beowulf. Beowulf was, however, let down by Naegling, which failed him in a fight with a dragon.<sup>45</sup>

The German version of the text about Dietrich is based on a Tyrolean legend, *The Small Rose Garden* (*Der kleine Rosengarten*), originating from the area around a castle in Tirol, near Merano.<sup>46</sup> The text about Dietrich von Bern has two layers – the theme of the Rose Garden and the theme of the rescue of Krinhult, kidnapped and held by the dwarf king in his underworld kingdom. In the Czech version, the theme of the Rose Garden is more elaborate, which brings the Czech version closer to the Bavarian-Austrian group of manuscripts although some characteristics differ from this group. The German version was

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<sup>43</sup> *Rytířské srdce majíce* (see note 18), 333, or H. Munro Chadwick, *The Heroic Age* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 27.

<sup>44</sup> For the appearance of Wayland, his son Witege, and his sword Mimung in German mythology, with much detail, see Karl Simrock, *Handbuch der Deutschen Mythologie mit Einschluss der nordischen* (Bonn: Adolf Marcus, 1878); Witege on pages 256, 411, 419 and 441, Wayland 228, 248, 255, 259, 360, 418–19, 432, 441, and Mimung 81. For the complete English translation, see *The Wayland-Dietrich Saga*, ed. Katherine M. Buck (London: Alfred M. Mayhew, 1924–1925), Part I. For a shorter fairytale-style English edition of the saga (with a little misunderstanding of the name of Wayland's son), see *Old Norse Sagas*, ed. Emily S. Cappel. Illustrated Library of Fairy Tales (London: W. Swan Sonnenschein & Co., 1883), 177–89, or for a shorter recapitulation of the basic plot line of the story of Wayland, see Maria Sachiko Cecire, “Ban Welondes: Wayland Smith in Popular Culture,” *Anglo-Saxon Culture and the Modern Imagination*, ed. David Clark and Nicholas Perkins. Medievalism, 1 (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2010), 201–18.

<sup>45</sup> For the use of Naegling in the story of Beowulf, see Brady Caroline, “Weapons in Beowulf: An Analysis of the Nominal Compounds and an Evaluation of the Poet's Use of Them,” *Anglo-Saxon England* 8 (1979): 79–141.

<sup>46</sup> *Rytířské srdce majíce* (see note 18), 10.

published several times from the twelfth century on. The Czech version of the story was repeatedly published all the way to the fifteenth century.<sup>47</sup>

### ***Tandrias and Floribell (Tandariáš a Floribella)***

The third story is from the Arthurian legend cycle and describes the story of Tandrias and Floribell.<sup>48</sup> The author of its German template was a Salzburg poet, The Pleier, in the second half of the thirteenth century.<sup>49</sup> Floribell is an Indian princess who lost her parents as well as a brother and becomes a protégée of King Arthur, who pledges to protect her honor.<sup>50</sup>

One of her squires who is supposed to protect her, however, falls in love with her and she falls in love with him (115–95). Even though their love is pure, they flee Arthur's rage to the castle of Tandrias father (195–290). Arthur puts together a punitive party and sets off with a whole army towards Tandrias's father and besieges his castle. In an effort to prevent the bloodshed of a large battle, Tandrias offers himself in one-to-one combat with the generals of Arthur's army (290–335). Tandrias defeats three Knights of the Round Table – Keiŕ, Gâvân, and Gawin – which forces Arthur to set up a fair trial (335–66). As a result of this trial, the lovers are sentenced to separation until Arthur's rage passes (366–445). Tandrias then tries to distract himself from his sorrow by setting off on an adventurous journey during which he is at first ambushed, loses his whole party and only by pure luck saves his own life (447–504). With the help of a good townsman, he takes revenge, saves several maidens, defeats a dwarf and a great pagan, who together had captured thousands of people. From all his victories, he sends thousands' strong crowds together with their defeated tyrants to Arthur's court as proof of his loyalty and his pure love toward Floribell (550–1145).

During the last rescue of a maiden, he is forced to become a hostage instead of her (1145–284). In the course of his captivity he is helped by another maiden who allows him to take part anonymously in joust tournaments, which he subsequently wins in disguise without anybody guessing his true identity or

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<sup>47</sup> *Rytířské srdce majice* (see note 18), 10.

<sup>48</sup> In the Czech version, Tandarias and Floribell are called by Czech names: "Tandariáš a Floribella." But in this study, I keep to the English version of their names: "Tandrias and Floribell." The edition with which I worked for this study comes from the manuscript housed in the National Museum Library in Prague – Knihovna Národního muzea v Praze, Pinvičkův sborník, sign. II F 8, folio 160b–186b.

<sup>49</sup> *Rytířské srdce majice* (see note 18), 10.

<sup>50</sup> "Tandariáš a Floribella," *Rytířské srdce majice* (see note 18), verses 1–115.

without his captor noticing his absence (1285–674). At this time, Arthur is already searching for him and calls assemblies where he offers a reward for information leading to the discovery of his whereabouts. His captor finds out who he has been holding in his tower and Tandrias is freed from his imprisonment, so the story finishes in a movie-style happy ending (1675–840).

The text connects court literature and folk legends. In the Czech version the fantastic motives are slightly pushed into the background and in the front is the romantic motivation, joust tournaments and Tandrias's heroic deeds that gained him a pardon from the king and the hand of his beloved.<sup>51</sup>

### ***The Chronicle of Bruncvik (Kronika o Bruncvíkovi)***

The last story included in this analysis contains the name of the hero Bruncvik.<sup>52</sup> *The Chronicle of Bruncvik* can also be likened – based on its topic – to four other prose writings of the Czech medieval era: the *Chronicle of Stilfrid (Kronika o Štilfridovi)*, from the second half of the fourteenth century, who was Bruncvik's father); *Alexander* (second half of the fourteenth century); a story called *About Apollo (O Apolónovi)*, second half of the fourteenth century); and the *Chronicle Troiana (Kronika trojanská)*, second half of the fourteenth century). All of these works pursued mainly ethical-moral admonishments as a common goal.<sup>53</sup> The Czech version of the *Chronicle of Bruncvik* is from the second half of the fourteenth century and was written only after the Czech adaptation of Duke Ernst.<sup>54</sup>

Bruncvik took the reign over Bohemia after his father Stilfrid's death, and, like his father, he also wishes to gain for himself and his people a superior coat of arms – the lion itself.<sup>55</sup> He sets off on a mission to find one.<sup>56</sup> As we will see, he eventually succeeds but not before visiting many wondrous places. First, he gets shipwrecked near the island of *Zelator*, dominated by the Jakštýn Mountain,<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> *Rytířské srdce majíce* (see note 18), 10.

<sup>52</sup> In the Czech version, the *Chronicle of Bruncvik* is called by the Czech name: *Kronika o Bruncvíkovi*. But in this study, I use the English version of his name: *Chronicle of Bruncvik*. The edition with which I worked for this study comes from the manuscript held by the National Library of Warsaw – Biblioteka Narodowa, Biblioteka Baworowskich (Baw. 990), sign. Rps 12594 II, folio 1a–15b.

<sup>53</sup> *Próza českého středověku* (see note 23), 9.

<sup>54</sup> *Próza českého středověku* (see note 23), 15–16.

<sup>55</sup> See the end part of this study.

<sup>56</sup> "Kronika o Bruncvíkovi," *Próza českého středověku*, ed. Milada Nedvědová and Jaroslav Kolár. *Živá díla minulosti*, 95 (Prague: Odeon, 1983), folio 203a.

<sup>57</sup> In old Czech this word was used as a name for amber and for magnetite.



which attracts the whole Bruncvik party toward itself (folio 203b). Bruncvik stays there for three years – like Duke Ernst. During this time, he gets to know intimately a mermaid named *Europa*, who has the head and arms of a maiden, and everything else of a fish (203b). In the end, Bruncvik and an old knight, Balad, are the only surviving members of their party. Balad helps Bruncvik by suggesting that he can save himself by pretending to be food – sewn into a horse's skin – for the mythical bird, Roc. He is indeed taken by the bird to its nest many miles away (204a).

After a successful landing in Roc's nest, Bruncvik subsequently comes to a deep forest where he witnesses a fight between a lion and a nine-headed dragon. As a proper ruler and king,<sup>58</sup> he of course decides to help the lion. Together, they defeat the dragon, and after some interlude, during which the lion heals himself and feeds Bruncvik (the lion roasts his catch with his hot breath), who was also injured,<sup>59</sup> they become friends and travel together for the rest of the journey (204a–204b).

The next phase of their journey sees them sailing onward, before stopping at a glowing mountain where Bruncvik cuts a gemstone the size of a human head (205a).<sup>60</sup> They soon reach an island belonging to the king, Olibrius, who has eyes at the front as well as at the back of his head and eighteen fingers on each hand and eighteen toes on each foot. His people are also a mix of all kinds of human and semi-human creatures: the *Monopods*, the *Cyclops*, people with horns above their eyes, two-headed people, the *Cynocephalus*, half-white, half-grey people, people humpbacked like camels or red like foxes (205a). This king has control over the Iron Gate that Bruncvik needs to sail through in order to continue his journey. The king insists that he will be allowed this passage only if he rescues the king's daughter, *Africa*, who is held captive at the castle *Arabia* by a dragon basilisk. Bruncvik of course agrees and together with the lion defeats the monsters *Monetrus*, *Glato*, *Sydrofon*, and finally even the basilisk (with the help of a ring with the strength of twenty-four men).<sup>61</sup> He rescues Africa, held captive by the basilisk, who had bound her legs with two snakes to prevent her from escaping during his absence (205b–206b). The gratitude of King Olibrius is, however, too great, and Bruncvik is forced to marry Africa.

One night, Bruncvik is walking through Olibrius's castle and in a cellar he finds an old sword without a hilt. He gives it the hilt from his own sword thereby swapping the swords. He tricks Africa into revealing that the sword is

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<sup>58</sup> See the end part of this study.

<sup>59</sup> Compare with hot breath of Dietrich von Bern by which he melts down the manacles.

<sup>60</sup> Compare with story of Duke Ernst.

<sup>61</sup> Compare this with story of Dietrich von Bern.

magical and allows its owner to behead any given number of people in the vicinity. At the next feast Bruncvik uses this power of the sword and beheads all of the members of the court including the king and Bruncvik's own interim wife, Africa, hereby freeing himself and sailing forth with his lion (207a–207b). On the island of *Tripatrita* he defeats the demons called *Asmodeus* and then goes on to defeat the devils *Astriols*, also called *Blind Ones*, on *Egbatanis* Island. The ruler of these *Astriols*, after witnessing the power of the sword, promises Bruncvik that he will transport him by magic to Prague (207b).

In Prague, Bruncvik is confronted with the wedding of his original wife actually now taking place – because he had missed the seven-year deadline for his return that he had set prior to his departure. He arrives at the wedding in the disguise of a wanderer and secretly sends his wife Noemeni a ring in a goblet of wine. While leaving Prague Castle he writes on the castle walls: “The one who left seven years ago, was here.” He then becomes a target of Noemeni's new husband who soon catches up with him. Bruncvik, however, uses his magical sword and rather easily gets rid of his rival. Finally, at the end of his seven-year long journey he becomes the ruler again; he has a real lion and a wife, and with the new coat of arms of the Czech kingdom, he rules another 45 years until his son Ladislav replaces him (208a–208b).

When we consider these four analyzed texts we can include the following objects and creatures into the inventory of the imagination of fourteenth-century Czech society in the following quantities:

Magical tables (x1), the Nose people (x1), Indian princess (x2), magnetic mountain and the bird *Roc* (x2), *Cyclops* (x2), the *Monopods* (x2), the *Panotti* (x1), the *Pygmies* (x1), giants (x4), pagans (x12), leopards (x2), dwarfs (x2), snake blood armor (x1), a crown with mechanical birds (x1), undefeatable shield (x1), twelve-men strength belt (x1), invisibility cloak (x1), light-hiding gemstone (x1), twelve-men strength ring (x1), twenty-four-men strength ring (x1), legendary swords Mimung and Naegling (x1), lion as a helper (x1), nine-headed dragon (x1), Bruncvik's magical sword (x1), monsters *Monetrus* (x1), *Glato* (x1) and *Sidrofon* (x1), basilisk (x1), *Astriols* (x1), *Asmodeus* (x1), King Olibrius (x1), creatures with horns above their eyes (x1), two-headed people (x1), *Cynocephalus* (x1), half-white and half-grey people (x1), humpbacked people like camels (x1) and people red as foxes (x1).

Next, I would like to attempt to fit the above-mentioned fantastic motifs into Jacques Le Goff's classification of the mysterious. Le Goff considered *mira-bilia* to be objects, places, or beings, at which a medieval person looked with admiration and awe. These were the things and processes that were strange and specific reflections of reality, at which people marveled. These objects left a certain feeling of the supernatural that was impossible to explain by reason

or on the basis of Scripture.<sup>62</sup> As much as Le Goff was working mainly with the culture of the European West in the Middle Ages, there is no doubt that his classification of the mysterious can also be applied even to the area of medieval Bohemia while taking into consideration local specifics and oddities, which are an integral part of the European medieval culture.

Interwoven within Le Goff's inventory of the medieval mysteriousness of the Latin milieu of the European West of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries and the fantastic texts of the Czech world, we can find the following: countries and places – hollow mountains, islands, enchanting places made by a human hand; human and anthropomorphic beings – giants and dwarfs, human monsters, men and women with physical oddities or abnormalities; animals real and imaginal; half-people and half-animals; objects protecting and empowering; and beds as sacred spaces.<sup>63</sup>

Furthermore, within the intellectual and ideological overlap of the analyzed texts with those outside of the Czech culture is the inclusion of commonly known facts from the European framework of knowledge (encyclopedias, bestiaries etc.). In the imagination of the Luxembourg Czechs, we can find biblical, classical, barbarian, and Oriental sources of the mysterious. The origins of the sources here are Celtic, Nordic (German),<sup>64</sup> and Oriental. Thus the expressions of the mysterious according to Le Goff's classification can be found in late fourteenth-century Bohemia as well in the form of metamorphosis and the mystery in literature.<sup>65</sup>

## Conclusion

Two travelogues that entered Czech literature in the fourteenth century being translated from contemporary European literature heavily influenced the direction which Czech literature was to take, especially in terms of the popularity of

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<sup>62</sup> Jacques Le Goff, *Středověká imaginace* (Prague: Argo, 1998), 39–41. The pagination of the Czech version is slightly different from the French original, which I could consult as well – Jacques Le Goff, *L'imaginaire Médiéval* (Paris: Gallimard, 1985). Here I limit myself to the Czech version, but all my references can also be found in the French original. For a critical perspective regarding Le Goff's approach to medieval imagination, see the contribution to this volume by Scott L. Taylor.

<sup>63</sup> Le Goff, *Středověká imaginace* (see note 62), 50–56.

<sup>64</sup> See the swords from the legends and Wayland the Smith and his son.

<sup>65</sup> Le Goff, *Středověká imaginace* (see note 62), 51–52.

fantasy topics and themes originating in western medieval Europe as mentioned above: The travelogues by Marco Polo<sup>66</sup> and John Mandeville who might have been Jean de Bourgogne who lived in Liège and died in 1372. His works were already translated into Czech by Václav of Březová before the end of the fourteenth century.<sup>67</sup> This translation was based on a German version from the mid-fourteenth century written by Otto von Diemering. In Mandeville's narrative, we can, among other things, find the *Scyopodas* (*Skiopodes*), the bird *Roc*, *Pygmies* (four spans tall gnomes), giants, the *Cynocephalus* (human body and head of a dog), and India, not only as a source of mystery<sup>68</sup> but also as a place where Christians live.<sup>69</sup> All of this can be specifically found in the Czech-language works within the scope of this study. We can therefore assume that Mandeville's forms of the mysterious were one of the factors influencing the Czech imagination of the late fourteenth century.

The imagination of medieval Europe was not only connected on the axis joining Latin western Europe and Central-Eastern Europe, but there were also

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**66** In his travelogue we can besides other things find the *Cynocephalus* (a hybrid being consisting of a human body and the head of a dog). See Kappler, *Monstres, Démons et Merveilles* (see note 34), 151.

**67** Before the year 1600 we can count of up to at least ninety-two editions of this travelogue published in over three hundred manuscripts in at least ten languages (French, English, Latin, German, Dutch, Danish, Czech, Italian, Spanish, and Irish). Numbers are taken over from Kappler, *Monstres, Démons et Merveilles* (see note 34), 151.

**68** Eduard Petrů, *Vzrušující skutečnosti: Fakta a fantazie ve středověké a humanistické literatuře* (Ostrava: Profil, 1984), 34–37.

**69** See the Indian princess in the story of Duke Ernst and in the story of Tandarias and Floribell. Both these princesses were Christians. Compare this with the fact that there was a Christian minority in India in the period of the European Middle Ages of whom the Europeans might have been aware also thanks to the existence of travelogues. See Stephen Neill, *A History of Christianity in India: The Beginnings to AD 1707* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984). Neill covers all possible mentions about the Christians in India from antiquity to the Middle Ages. See especially 26–49 (literal evidence) and 68–86 (European travelers to India from the twelfth century on). He reminds us also of the history of John of Marignolli who became papal ambassador to the Great Khan from 1338 to 1347. On his way back he spent one year in India, where he also encountered Christians. In 1353 he reached Avignon, and finally in 1355 he was called to the court of Charles IV in Prague, where the task of writing the Chronicle of Bohemia was given to him; see 78–81. In Bohemia, this *Kronika Jana Marignolliho* was not popular because it was not Bohemia-centric enough. Therefore, as a minor conclusion we can point out that there was even a distinct possibility that the knowledge of Christians in India could have entered the Central European world in this way. For other travelers of the fourteenth century visiting India after the peace between the Khan empire and India, see Percy G. Adams, *Travel Literature and the Evolution of the Novel* (Lexington, KY: The University Press of Kentucky), 47–48.

sources of imaginative writing being adopted from within these regions. Evidence for this is most noticeable in the story of Bruncvik which is nowadays an integral part of the collective imagination about Czech history “inside” of Central-Eastern Europe. We can find a parallel to this in the German text (or rather to the story about the friendship between a human and a lion) originally in classical Rome (approximately the second century), as in the story of *Androcles* and in *Aesop's Fables*. Then it appears (from approximately the sixth century) in the story *The Shepherd and the Lion*, after that in the late twelfth century in an Arthurian romance by Chrétien de Troyes, *Yvain, the Knight of the Lion*, in Hartmann von Aue's Middle High German *Iwein* (ca. 1190), and around the year 1260 in the *Golden Legend* by Jacobus de Voragine<sup>70</sup>; from here it turned into the German version of Bruncvik upon which the Czech version is based. Throughout this process of adoption there are only minor changes around the central couple, ‘human – lion,’ and only the German translation of the original French *Yvain* by Chrétien de Troyes creates the triangle dragon-lion-human which is also in the Czech version of the Bruncvik.<sup>71</sup>

The affinity between the imaginative elements within the Czech lands of the fourteenth century and those of medieval West Europe is also supported by a certain absence of some topics. While in the Arthurian cycle and in other early medieval literature a magician or a wizard was able to play a positive role, from the fourteenth century on the magical – according to the Church's moral value scale – descended to a level of a deplorable heresy.<sup>72</sup> This is the reason why there is no wizard or witch in the analyzed texts. So even this absence is to some extent evidence that the intellectual setting in the Czech lands of the fourteenth century wasn't significantly different from the situation in the countries of Latin medieval western Europe.

It is also possible to conclude that the discussed texts of the fourteenth century mirror the social climate of medieval western Europe, especially German society, in their similar historical experiences as well through the affinity of similar historic developments. This is mainly the case in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries during the reign of the Luxembourg dynasty. At this time, there are similar numbers of very powerful urban families in Czech medieval

<sup>70</sup> Jean Frappier, *Étude sur Yvain ou le Chevalier au lion de Chrétien de Troyes* (Paris: Société d'Enseignement Supérieur, 1969) 108–11.

<sup>71</sup> Le Goff, *Středověká imaginace* (see note 62), 153, 228.

<sup>72</sup> Šmahel, *Mezi středověkem a renesancí* (see note 4), 250–52. Known witch trials from the years 1300–1499, which reflect this trend, were presented for example by Richard Kieckhefer, *European Witch Trials: Their Foundations in Popular and Learned Culture, 1300–1500* (London: Routledge, 2011).

towns as in German-speaking areas, and these share similar degrees of social and economic power as well as a political affinity between them.<sup>73</sup>

In Czech culture, especially during the reign of Charles IV, we observe a rising demand for courtly narratives emphasizing more modern topics that had been appearing in the Latin culture of western Europe already for a while – for example the fantastic account in the stories of *Bruncvik* and *Duke Ernst*. Moral attitudes and ideals are most emphasized in the account of *Duke Ernst*: erudition of his mother, formalities and ceremoniousness of the arrangement of the marriage between his mother and the emperor, references to moral imperatives such as ‘we would do wrong, if we annihilate the people,’ the attempt to secure the forgiveness of the emperor and step-father by taking part in the crusade or the final reconciliation through maternal love.

Based on the above-mentioned points, we can finally conclude that the form of the collective imagination of some medieval “nations” can be, to a certain extent, the result of authors’ choices to write about non-domestic topics attractive to readers, their partial adaptation for the domestic audience, and their widespread publication intended to maximize popularity rather than to use imaginative material based on the recording of an older local oral tradition typically found in a particular national tradition. In the works analyzed here, traces of typical traditional material are seen in, among other things, the adaptation of ‘nationalistic’ attitudes to Czech culture. For example, Duke Ernst sails off with his party from Constantinople singing a Czech medieval religious song, “*Hospodine pomiluj ny*.”<sup>74</sup> A noteworthy feature in the story of *Bruncvik* is when he brings his companion, the lion to Prague castle. The lion is becoming *de facto* a new symbol of the ruler but at the same time it is being adopted by towns, being drawn on their town walls and embroidered on banners.<sup>75</sup> And

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73 Eduard Maur, “Obyvatelstvo českých zemí ve středověku,” *Dějiny obyvatelstva českých zemí*, Ludmila Fialová, Pavla Horská, Milan Kučera, Eduard Maur, Jiří Musil and Milan Stloukal, *Patria*, 2 (Prague: Mladá fronta, 1998), 35–75; here 35–55; for more details, see Vratislav Vaníček, *Velké dějiny zemí Koruny české*, vol. I: 1197–1250 (Prague and Litomyšl: Paseka, 2000); Vratislav Vaníček, *Velké dějiny zemí Koruny české*, vol. III: 1250–1310 (Prague and Litomyšl: Paseka, 2002); Lenka Bobková, *Velké dějiny zemí Koruny české*, vol. IVa: 1310–1402 (Prague and Litomyšl: Paseka, 2003); Bobková and Bartlová, *Velké dějiny zemí Koruny české*, vol. IVb (see note 11).

74 “Vévoda Arnošt” (see note 18), verses 2260–75.

75 “Kronika o Bruncvíkovi” (see note 56), folio 208b.

the Czech state still to this day carries this symbol, which has undergone only minor adjustments over the centuries.<sup>76</sup>

A large number of other symbols and themes from these texts have been preserved in written documents mirroring the collective imagination of the Czech culture in a permanent way. Nine-headed dragons, magic rings, magic hats, dwarfs, tables from which food never disappears, amazing castles, individuals with abnormal physical dispositions and abilities (see, e.g., the Czech fairy-tale *Long, Broad and Sharp-sight*<sup>77</sup>) inspired by reports about legendary inhabitants of fantastic countries, a ruler coming back to his country in disguise, or Bruncvik himself – all of that remained in the form of fairy tales,<sup>78</sup> or the so-called books of folk reading<sup>79</sup> or the *Ancient Bohemian Legends*, a part of the Czech fantasy up until today, which therefore illustrates the affinity of the Czech imagination of the late Luxembourg Czech lands with the imagination of Latin medieval Europe. And after all, it is also a great example of the mixture of different sources of imagination in medieval Europe of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries becoming a source of imagination for the nations of today's Europe.

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**76** The so-called Great State Emblem of the Czech Republic is comprised of four heraldic squares. According to the law number 3/1993 Sb.: “... The Great State Emblem is comprised of a square shield, in whose first and fourth red squares is a silver two-tailed jumping lion with a golden crown and golden armor. In the second blue square there is a silver-red chess eagle with a golden crown and golden armor. In the third golden square there is a black eagle with a silver Crescent finished with shamrocks and with a small cross in the middle, with a golden crown and red armor.” Apart from this most public symbol the so-called Small State Emblem of the Czech Republic is defined as: “The Small State Emblem is comprised of a red shield on which there is a silver two-tailed jumping lion with a golden crown and golden armor.” This emblem with the Czech two-tailed lion is also an integral part of the Standard of the President of the Czech Republic and also part of the Czech Republic State Seal. Historically the two-tailed lion had become a symbol of the Czech king and Czech Kingdom sometime in the second half of the thirteenth century. The oldest known colored portrayal comes from the Gozzoburg in Krems an der Donau (Austria), approximately 1270–1280.

**77** Collected from folk fairy-tales in the nineteenth century by Karel Jaromír Erben (1811–1870). See one of modern editions of his work, Karel Jaromír Erben, *České pohádky* (Prague: Albatros, 1961), 27–38 (*Dlouhý, široký a bystrozraký*).

**78** See for example Erben, *České pohádky* (see note 77), 85–91

**79** See for example Václav Rodomil Kramerius, *Štylfríd, kníže a pán český a syn jeho Bruncvik, též kníže a pán český* (Jindřichův Hradec: fifties of the nineteenth century, without further specification); Václav Rodomil Kramerius, *Princezna Nespta aneb tři dary kouzelné: sáček, pláštík a kord* (Skalice: without known publisher, 1871); *Tři knížky lidového čtení*, ed. Jaroslav Kolár. Česká knižnice, 17 (Prague: Nakladatelství Lidové noviny, 2000); *Fortunatus*, ed. Josef Hrabánek. Památky staré literatury české, 32 (Prague: Academia, 1970), 44–156.





Martha Moffitt Peacock

# The Mermaid of Edam and the Emergence of Dutch National Identity

While tales of mermaids have a long history in cultures from around the world and dating from earliest times to the present, one particular legend developed a rather unique perspective regarding such a fantastic creature. This was the story of a mermaid who was purportedly rescued from the Purmer lake – a polder and reclaimed lake in the Dutch province of Northern Holland, located between the towns of Purmerend and Edam-Volendam, northeast of Amsterdam – and came to live with the citizenry of Edam in 1403. Unlike other mythological characters of her same ilk, the Mermaid of Edam did not bring disaster and danger; instead, she became a tourist attraction who brought fame to the cities with which she was associated.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, because she was taught to spin and because she converted to Christianity, she was considered an exemplum of virtue. The legend regarding this female curiosity was kept alive for centuries in the Netherlands through both visual and textual accounts. Indeed, her lasting popularity did much to enhance the reputation of mermaids generally in the Dutch Republic, as they came to represent an expression of nationalistic fervor in support of the new federation.

In order to comprehend this unusual acceptance of mermaids, it is important to touch briefly on the history of mermaid lore, which begins in antiquity. Descriptions of half woman, half fish creatures occur already in early Babylonian and Assyrian legends. Moreover, they are depicted in the sculptural decoration of those societies, and like other magical characters, they presumably served an apotropaic function.<sup>2</sup> Later these myths were absorbed into Greek and Roman mythology. For example, one Greek legend recounts how Alexander the Great's sister, Thessalonike, was turned into a mermaid after her death. For those sailors and ships that pleased her, she would provide them with safe waters, but for those that did not, she sent them to their doom by instigating violent storms.<sup>3</sup> During the

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1 Albrecht Classen discusses medieval mermaid lore generally and mentions also the Mermaid of Edam in his contribution to this volume.

2 Jeremy A. Black et al., *Gods, Demons, and Symbols of Ancient Mesopotamia: An Illustrated Dictionary* (London: Published by British Museum Press for the Trustees of the British Museum, 1992), 130–32.

3 Soula Mitakidou, Anthony L. Manna, and Melpomeni Kanatsouli, *Folktales from Greece: A Treasury of Delights* (Greenwood Village, CO.: Libraries Unlimited, 2002), 93–96.

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**Martha Moffitt Peacock**, Brigham Young University, Provo, UT, USA

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medieval era, mermaids were included in bestiaries, and they were particularly noted for their tempting beauty, as well as their vanity. Thus, they are frequently represented holding mirrors and combs. The earliest known bestiary written in Dutch by Jacob van Maerlant (1235–1291) describes the conjoining of the ancient, seductive sirens with mermaids in the tales of Odysseus and the Argonauts.<sup>4</sup>

These dangerous creatures lured sailors with their enchanting music and singing voices to shipwreck on the rocky coast of their island, such as the famous Lorelei (Lorely) in the river Rhine. Hence, in medieval and early modern literature, Chaucer, Boccaccio, Shakespeare, Erasmus, Paracelsus, and others all warned of the lust these sirens and mermaids inspired in men who were soon brought to their downfall.<sup>5</sup> In similar fashion, certain images depict winged mermaids playing musical instruments while men are shown drowning in the surrounding waters.

In the Netherlands specifically, there are many legends of mermaid sightings that were commonly understood to be omens of disasters at sea. Furthermore, confrontations with mermaids also often resulted in the decline of fishing and trading centers along the coast. Hence, in most early Netherlandish folklore, mermaids brought little good and they usually prophesied some sort of downfall. There is, for example, the case of the Mermaid of Mardijke, who when she was caught by fishermen, cursed the village with poverty. As a result, in 1530 when the village was afflicted by the Sint Felix flood, the harbor silted up and became useless. And in the village of Wenduine, the legend is told of a fleet of 24 boats that were out to sea, when a young man upon hearing the cry of a mermaid quickly steered his vessel back to the safety of the port while the other boats all sank. In the seaport of Ostend, the village continually met with floods and disasters, supposedly due to the legend that a mermaid had been killed there. One of the most famous of these fantastic tales was the story of the Mermaid of Damme, who in revenge for her capture, prognosticated the downfall of the city, which gradually took place throughout the late Middle Ages and the early modern era via a series of floods. The town of Westenschouwen had several legends of disaster associated with the capture of mermaids. One example was even that of a flying mermaid who shouted her curse over the town. Throughout its history, the city of Reimerswaal also suffered a series of disasters, fires, floods, and storms

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<sup>4</sup> Bert Sliggers, *Meerminnen En Meermannen: Van Duinkerke Tot Sylt* (The Hague: Kruseman, 1977), 20–24.

<sup>5</sup> H. David Brumble, *Classical Myths and Legends in the Middle Ages and Renaissance: A Dictionary of Allegorical Meanings* (Westport, CO: Greenwood Press, 1998), 421; Tara E. Pedersen, *Mermaids and the Production of Knowledge in Early Modern England* (Farnham, Surrey, England, and Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2015).

because in the late Middle Ages, a mermaid had foretold the downfall of the city due to the extreme wealth and pride of its citizenry. In like manner, the cities of Bath, Saeftinghe, Namen, Zevenbergen, Steenberg, Woensdrecht, and Muiden all met with disaster due to the prophecies of mermaids.<sup>6</sup>

In addition to the natural disasters they initiated, the sexual passion inspired by these creatures was considered one of their most treacherous characteristics. Indeed, the calamitous curse of a mermaid was often the result of a mortal falling in love with, and capturing, the fantasy being, a hybrid monster. The easiest way to entrap such a creature was to steal its mermaid's tail so that it could not escape. An old Netherlandish fairytale relates the story of how three mermaids swam to a beach, and when they thought no one was looking they removed their mermaid skins and emerged as three naked young women. A young man who was spying on them, stole one of the tails, hid it in his house, and married the beautiful young woman who could not go back to sea. Alas, eventually she found her tail and rejoined her fellow sea creatures. This threat of alluring mermaids is visually represented in the scenes of lust scattered throughout the early sixteenth-century painting of the *Garden of Earthly Delights* by Hieronymus Bosch. In the background pool of the central panel, men eagerly reach out and embrace these beautiful females. Eventually these acts will lead to their downfall in the hell scene of the adjoining panel.<sup>7</sup>

With this negative and dangerous history of mermaids in mind, it is necessary to return to the exceptional Mermaid of Edam. According to a 1470 account by the monk Jan Gerbrandsz of Leiden, in 1403 violent waves destroyed the dikes that were set up to separate the Purmer lake from the Zuider sea.<sup>8</sup> The water that came rushing into the lake brought with it an untamed female-person covered in seaweed. After the storm had calmed, the dikes were quickly restored, which meant that the mermaid was trapped. While swimming around in the lake, the sea creature was spotted by two milkmaids. Eventually these women hauled her into their boat and took her back to Edam. The people of Edam could not understand her language, but they washed away her green seaweed covering and dressed and fed her like a human. Word of this so-called sea-woman soon spread throughout the Netherlands, and people came to the

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<sup>6</sup> Sliggers catalogs the many legends of Netherlandish mermaids in *Meerminnen En Meermannen* (see note 4).

<sup>7</sup> See Albrecht Classen's Introduction to this text for a lengthy discussion and reproduction of Hieronymus Bosch's painting.

<sup>8</sup> Jan Gerbrandsz's account is quoted in Adriaen Vosmaer, "Beschrijving Van De Zoogenaamde Meermin Der Stad Haarlem," *Verhandelingen, Uitgegeeven Door De Hollandsche Maatschappye Der Weetenschappen, Te Haarlem* 23 (1786): 90–92.

city to view this well-guarded phenomenon. The citizens of Haarlem found out about this woman, and they persuaded the Edamers to let her come dwell with them. Here she lived for several years and was taught how to spin. Like Edamers, Haarlemers were very proud of their popular spinning attraction whose fame continued to grow. And one further positive characteristic of this woman was that she converted to Christianity and became very religious, frequently making the sign of the cross. So, despite her bestial origins, after her death she was buried in the Christian cemetery.

As a result of the Mermaid of Edam's virtuous characteristics of industry and piety, her story, more than any other mermaid legend, truly captured the Dutch imagination. In the sixteenth century, her account was kept alive by both Netherlandish and foreign authors. The legend seemed to have veracity because it was a monk who first published the story, and his report was supposedly based on eye-witness testimonials. The story was also repeated in various chronicles, such as *Die cronycke van Hollandt, Zeelandt ende Vrieslant* of 1517 by Cornelius Aurelius (ca. 1460–1531). He recounts the original story but adds more details; for instance, he indicates that she was a wild and untamed woman who was covered with watery material such as moss and other slime.<sup>9</sup> In his chronicle, *Rerum Belgicarum Annales, chronici et historici*, Goudanus Reynerus Snoyus (died 1537) repeated, for the most part, the earlier account, but he identified the Mermaid as a female water-person and indicated that she had been taught to spin in Edam.<sup>10</sup> Hadrianus Junius's (1511–1575) *Batavia* (ca. 1560) cites these previous chronicles in his account of the Mermaid, whom he calls a monster.<sup>11</sup> Nevertheless, the author cannot quite decide how to categorize her, so he describes her as a fish who adopted human manners such as spinning, walking, standing, eating, drinking, and making the sign of the cross. Still, she was considered to be one of God's creations.

Foreigners also wrote accounts of this Dutch phenomenon. In 1567 the Italian merchant and diplomat Lodovico Guicciardini (1521–1589) praised the city of Haarlem in his description of the Low Countries (1567). He then transitions to a discussion of mermen and merwomen and describes them as being like fish

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<sup>9</sup> Cornelius Aurelius, *Die cronycke van Hollandt, Zeelandt ende Vrieslant, met die cronike der biscoppen van Utrecht (Divisiechroniek)*, ed. Aarnoud de Hamer (The Hague: DBNL, 2011), 239v.

<sup>10</sup> Goudanus Reynerus Snoyus's account is also quoted by Vosmaer, "Beschrijving Van De Zoogenaamde Meermin Der Stad Haarlem" (see note 8), 92–93.

<sup>11</sup> Hadrianus Junius's sixteenth-century text was later translated by Godefroy Boot into Dutch, *Een seer cort doch clare beschrijvinge vande voornaemste ghemuyrde ende ongemuyrde steden ende vlekken van Holland ende West-Vriesland* (Delft: Ian Andriesz, 1609), 26–26v.

but with human parts. He mentions the Mermaid who was captured in 1403 and brought to Haarlem, but he claims that she remained dumb. Nevertheless, she was tamed, ate like humans, and was taught to spin. Guicciardini was convinced of the truth of this legend because of the many highly respected authors who had recorded the story.<sup>12</sup> The French writer and historian, Jean-Nicolas de Parival (1605–1669) also recorded the legend of the Mermaid of Edam, whom he called a nymph or a marine woman.<sup>13</sup> He reiterates that she never learned to speak, but that she lived for many years in Haarlem. He asserts that people would not likely believe this story because it seemed like an ancient myth.

During the seventeenth century, the legend continued to be expanded upon in civic and national histories. In his text of 1648, *Harlemias, ofte, om beter te seggen, de eerste stichtinghe der stadt Haerlem, het toe-nemen en vergrootinghe der selfden*, Theodorus Schrevelius (1572–1649) described her as a sea-monster who was captured by milkmaids with the help of fishermen.<sup>14</sup> As the text is about the history of Haarlem, the author gives important credit to the city and considers the creature to be a miracle. He claims that it was in Haarlem that she was tamed and where she learned to speak. The women of the city also taught her to spin, thus spreading her fame. In his general history of the Netherlands of 1645, Caspar Wachtendorp (died 1700) retold the legend in rhyming verse.<sup>15</sup> He added several details about this sea-woman, including the fact that she had very long hair and howled through the night like a dog. He too did not understand how a woman could live in the sea but reasoned that God could do anything.

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<sup>12</sup> Lodovico Guicciardini, *The Description of the Low Countreys and of the Provinces Thereof Gathered into an Epitome Out of the Historie of Lodovico Guiccardini* (Norwood, NJ: Walter J. Johnson, 1976, from the 1593 English translation), 63–64. This work was originally published in Italian (1567) in numerous editions and was later translated into Dutch and English.

<sup>13</sup> Jean Nicolas de Parival, *Les Delices De La Hollande, Composés Par Le Sieur Jean De Parival, Reveus, Corrigés, & Augmentés De Nouvau Par François Savinien D'Alquié, Lequel Y a Adjousté Tout Ce Qui s'Est Passé De Plus Considerable Depuis L'an 1661, Jusqués A L'an 1669, Avec Un Traité Particulier Des Delices Du Pais, Le Tout Accompagné De Plusieurs Belles Tailles Douces Dernière Edition* (Amsterdam: Jean de Ravestein, 1669), 148–49.

<sup>14</sup> Theodorus Schrevelius, *Harlemias, ofte, om beter te seggen, de eerste stichtinghe der stadt Haerlem, het toe-nemen en vergrootinghe der selfden* (Haarlem: Thomas Fonteyn, 1648), 397–98.

<sup>15</sup> Caspar Wachtendorp, *De Oude Hollandsche Geschiedenissen Ofte, Korte Hollandtsche Rym-Kronyck Verdeylt in 14. Poëtische Boecken, Beginnende Van De Sunt Vloet, Ende Eyndigende Met D'Beginnelsen Vanden Tegenwoordigen Oorlogh Inde Nederlanden, Ontrent 'T Jaer 1560* (Amsterdam: J. Pauli, 1645), book eight.

In the eighteenth century, Adriaen Vosmaer (1720–1799) discussed the legend in depth and listed the various authors who had contributed to the story.<sup>16</sup> He assumed that she was not actually a mermaid but a woman who had fallen overboard while at sea. As proof of his argument he referenced an early painting in Haarlem that depicts the woman with legs. Moreover, he pointed out that there are numerous such images in Edam and that prints had also been made of this creature in human form. However, it is important to recall that the previously mentioned Dutch fairytale indicates that mermaids could remove their tails, so images of the Mermaid in human form do not indicate a denial of the creature as a mermaid. Moreover, many of the inscriptions of later prints identify her as such. Nevertheless, despite his doubt over her incredible form, he continued on to document the truth of the legend in Haarlem, indicating that she lived in a house on the Grote Houtstraat.

During the formation of the Dutch Republic in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, visual representations of the Mermaid also began to appear. As with the previously mentioned paintings, a number of these depictions were found in Edam. One example, probably dating to the mid-sixteenth century, is sculpted in wood. Originally, it came from one of the doors of the small church in Edam, Onze Lieve Vrouwe Kerk (Fig. 1). This sculpture, which is about three feet high, depicts the Mermaid nude with long flowing hair that covers her genitalia. She does not wear a tail, because as mentioned these creatures could remove that part. Perhaps it was also considered more appropriate for a church setting to depict her in a less bestial form. And by this point in time, it was clear in the saga that she had become a Christian woman who could interact with the citizenry.

In the early seventeenth century, another tribute to the Mermaid in human form was created for the large or Sint Nicolaaskerk in Edam. She is found among other historical representations and coats of arms in the church. In a stained-glass window, she is depicted with the green skin described in the story (Fig. 2). Regarding her virtuous activity of spinning, she now holds a spindle in her right hand, while the left hand modestly pulls her long hair over her pudenda. Of further significance and in relation to the other windows celebrating the city are background depictions of the Purmeer lake, where she was discovered, and the city of

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<sup>16</sup> Vosmaer, “Beschrijving Van De Zoogenaamde Meermin Der Stad Haarlem” (see note 8), 85–111. A modern author who, like Vosmaer, discusses early modern belief in the Mermaid of Edam is Hans Peter Broedel, “The Mermaid of Edam Meets Medical Science: Empiricism and the Marvelous in Seventeenth-Century Zoological Thought,” *Monsters and Borders in the Early Modern Imagination*, ed. Jana Byars and Hans Peter Broedel (New York and London: Routledge, 2018), 35–50.

Edam, with its two church towers. Her nickname, *groen wijf* (green woman) is painted below. In these two church settings, it is as if she has become a replacement for earlier, pre-Protestant, depictions of Mary and female saints in churches who performed apotropaic functions. So, instead of signifying destruction and disaster, this Mermaid has become a secularized protectress of the city of Edam.

This safeguarding role is also emphasized in another sculptural representation of the Mermaid, which was placed on the Purmeer port at Edam in 1610. The inscription on this engraving made after the sculpture informs us that by 1784, the date of the print, the sculpture was badly damaged, which is further indicated by the broken right arm (Fig. 3). Nevertheless, the artist felt the piece was important enough to memorialize it in a print. The right arm might have originally held a spindle as in the stained glass, because several eighteenth-century reproductive prints represent her in this manner. On the rounded niche in which the sculpture was originally placed, were the inscribed words *DIT BEELD HIER OPGERICHT TOT EEN GEDACHTENIS WAT IN HET PURMERMEYR VOORHEEN GEVANGEN IS. ANNO 1403* (This image is created here in memory of what was caught in the past in the Purmeer lake in the year 1403). These early works in such prominent settings indicate that Edam regarded the Mermaid as an important protectress and a signifier of civic pride.

The Mermaids's position as a proud signifier of the city of Edam continues in the seventeenth century in an anonymous mid-century print (Fig. 4). By this point in time, she had truly become a tremendous creature. Her monumental body and partially glimpsed fish tail dominate the seascape. In her hands, she holds Edam's coat of arms; this famed city is further celebrated by the depiction and identifying of it in the background. The lengthy description below repeats her entire story. While Haarlem is mentioned, particular prominence is given to the city of Edam. The inscription also indicates that besides learning to eat their food, the Mermaid wore their clothes – this, despite the fact, that she is depicted in gigantic proportions and as half fish. In addition to this image, several anonymous prints of the Mermaid were produced during the eighteenth century (Fig. 5). Inscriptions indicate that they were done after a painting that hung in the Prinsenhof in Edam. Most of them, as in this example, depicted her standing in monumental form with a winder and spindle or else a distaff. The milkmaids from Edam who pulled her from the lake are also frequently pictured. Such easily reproducible and inexpensive images would have clearly spread the legend of the Mermaid throughout the Republic.

Other seventeenth-century depictions of the Mermaid demonstrate that she did, indeed, acquire national fame. For example, Claes Jansz Visscher II (1587–1652) made an engraving of the Mermaid for the borderwork of a map of Holland in ca. 1610 (Fig. 6). In this image, she has a fish tail, which makes her position

seated on a chair a bit awkward. Otherwise, she is situated in an ordinary Dutch house virtuously tending to her domestic task with distaff and spindle. The text above identifies her as the Mermaid who was found in the Purmer lake. The scene to her right signifies manly accomplishment, as opposed to her female skills. It depicts a man who was so strong that he killed a horse by striking it against a wall. The scene to the left of her represents another historical good woman of the Netherlands who purportedly bore 360 children. Hence, both scenes champion women for their heroic female virtues. The placement of this scene on a map of Holland, indicates the extent of the Mermaid's national reputation.

A similar image of the Mermaid spinning while seated in a house accompanies Wachtendorp's previously discussed poem of 1645 (Fig. 7). Again, she has a fish tail and is precariously balanced on a bench. Her domestic work is given even more import by the inclusion of skeins on the floor and a winder on the wall. More details of her story are indicated to the right where she is shown still in the lake and in the process of being captured by men in numerous fishing boats. The rays of light from the heavens recall the several texts in which she was considered to be a miracle and one of God's creations. It is important to note with this image and poem that they form part of Wachtendorp's larger history of the Republic. So once more, the Mermaid becomes part of the proud and famed cultural heritage of the new federation.

Having established that the Mermaid of Edam had become a symbol of civic and national pride in the early modern era, it is critical to turn to the political, cultural, and social development of the Republic and what mermaids, more generally, came to signify through this influence. Before attempting such an analysis, however, it is important to understand how the federation was established and to recount its growing sense of nationalism during this Golden Age. While many explanations have been given for the conflict between the people of the Netherlands and their Spanish king during the second half of the sixteenth century, religious differences certainly played an important role. Increasingly, the urban areas of the Netherlands had become attracted to various forms of Protestantism. At the same time, the Inquisition, supported by the devoutly Catholic King Philip II (1527–1598) was strengthening its battle against heretics. These religious tensions reached their height in 1566 as icon-destroying Calvinist crowds began wreaking havoc in many Catholic churches throughout the northern and southern areas of the Low Countries. Outraged, Philip sent an army north to quell this heretical fury. When the troops arrived nearly a year later and after peace had been restored, the citizenry perceived the huge army under the Duke of Alba (1507–1582) as a threat to their civic rights and religious practice.

Conditions worsened under the harsh rule of Alba, who was made governor-general in December of 1567. His infamous Council of Blood meted out



punishments against heretics and even those who tolerated Protestantism. In addition to issuing death sentences, the council also banished heretics and confiscated their lands. It was at this time that William of Orange (1533–1584) stadtholder (highest executive official) for the king in Holland and Zeeland, fled the Netherlands. He continued, however, to oppose Spanish power, and in 1568 he attempted an invasion of Brabant. Even though the coup was unsuccessful, this important first step of armed resistance marked the beginnings of a revolution that would significantly change the political face of Europe.

Resentment against Alba deepened when the duke instituted a new tax policy to help ease the financial crisis in Spain. Although the system was never imposed due to public resentment, its emergence sufficed to encourage the first independent meeting of the States of Holland. The assembly declared William as their leader and called for religious freedom; both were statements of revolt against Spanish rule. In July of 1581, the Act of Abjuration accused the king of violating the traditional and natural rights and laws of the Low Countries. Considering this tyranny, the rebels reasoned that they no longer needed to obey the king. And finally, in 1588, the northern provinces declared themselves a separate Republic.<sup>17</sup>

The new citizens of the Republic had little to unite themselves except for their shared hatred and distrust of both Spain and the Catholic Church. Nevertheless, William consistently promoted a unified Netherlands and attempted to construct a closer federation.<sup>18</sup> The Revolt had inspired the beginnings of a nationalist pride in the fatherland, and much of the new Dutch self-image centered on the courage and valor of that era. Moreover, this glorification of the militaristic and the heroic continued throughout the seventeenth century. By the end of the Eighty Years' War in 1648, the Dutch were extremely proud of their victory and their economic success, and the various provinces were functioning together as a nation with a unified set of patriotic symbols.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> For sources on the rebellion, see Geoffrey Parker, *The Dutch Revolt* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1977); Peter Limm, *The Dutch Revolt, 1559–1648* (New York: Longman, 1989); Jonathan I. Israel, *The Dutch Republic: Its Rise, Greatness, and Fall, 1477–1806* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995); *History of the Low Countries*, ed. Cornelis Hendrik Blom and Emiel Lamberts, trans. James C. Kennedy (1992; New York: Berghahn Books, 1999); Graham Darby, *The Origins and Development of the Dutch Revolt* (New York: Routledge, 2001); Paul Arblaster, *A History of the Low Countries* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006); James D. Tracy, *The Founding of the Dutch Republic: War, Finance, and Politics in Holland, 1572–1588* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008).

<sup>18</sup> Tracy, *The Founding of the Dutch Republic* (see note 16).

<sup>19</sup> There has been considerable debate over the nationalistic versus the territorial priorities of the Republic. It has been asserted that the Republic was functioning as a nation despite regional differences. See K. W. Swart, *The Miracle of the Dutch Republic as Seen in the Seventeenth*

I would suggest that the Mermaid became one of these nationalistic symbols. Moreover, I would argue that pride in the Mermaid of Edam legend specifically led to this new perspective on these mythical creatures. One of the important evidences of this altered perspective is found in the emergence of mermaids on Dutch maps. Many Dutch maps of the seventeenth century have depictions of mermaids, particularly maps of the coast. In one mid-seventeenth-century map of Holland created by Nicolaes Visscher I, for example, one finds in the upper right-hand corner a group of merpeople with a central focus on the armed mermaid holding a shield and a weaponized hook (Fig. 8). The shield bears a depiction of the triumphant Dutch Lion, another symbol of the Republic. She protects the numerous ships floating in the waters of the Zuider and North seas and the fishermen congregating below. Thus, the map is more than a geographical guide, it is an artistic celebration of Dutch maritime prowess, and the mermaid is an important symbol of this national source of pride.

Another depiction of patriotic signifiers that includes a mermaid is found in an anonymous print after Willem Barendsz (1550–1597) from a book of maps of 1595 (Fig. 9). In the upper left corner are the arms of Maurits of Orange (1567–1625) and in the upper right are the arms of Amsterdam. This powerful city was quickly expanding in size and was becoming the trading and political center of the Republic. A large ship dominates the print. The ship's name, *Fortuna*, is placed on a banner carried by the figure of Fortune situated on a globe. Other banners are inscribed with the Amsterdam coat of arms and the Dutch Lion. Equally prominent are the images of a mermaid and a merman on the sails at the right. As the princes of Orange had consistently encouraged a nationalistic spirit in the Republic, the efforts to bring together these various patriotic motifs would surely have had a similar purpose in mind. Once again, the mermaid in her protective role becomes part of the triumphant glorification of Dutch might and prosperity due to maritime power.

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*Century* (London: Lewis, 1969); Anthony D. Smith, *The Nation Made Real: Art and National Identity in Western Europe, 1600–1850* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013); *Dissident Identities in the Early Modern Low Countries*, ed. Alastair Duke, Judith Pollmann, and Andrew Spicer (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2009); Willem Frijhoff and Marijke Spies, *Dutch Culture in a European Perspective*, vol. 1, *1650: Hard-Won Unity*, trans. Myra Heerspink Scholz (1995; Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan / Assen: Royal van Gorcum, 2004), 140. Others emphasize regional or provincial loyalties over national ones, including Godefridus Johannes Hoogewerff, "Uit de geschiedenis van het Nederlandsch national besef," *Tijdschrift voor Geschiedenis* 44 (1929): 113–34; E. H. Kossmann, *In Praise of the Dutch Republic: Some Seventeenth-Century Attitudes* (London: Published for the college by H. K. Lewis, 1963); E. H. Kossmann, "The Dutch Case: A National or Regional Culture?" *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 5th series, 29 (1979): 155–68.

Perhaps no celebration of Dutch mercantilist strength is more overt than the coat of arms for the VOC or the Dutch East India Company. On a painted panel of 1651 by J. Becx de Jonge, the Company's coat of arms is displayed to the left, while the right side pictures the coat of arms of the Dutch city of Batavia (Fig. 10). The Dutch founded this city in 1619 and later developed it into a colony (today, Jakarta, Indonesia). Soon Batavia became the central port for the VOC and its trade in Asia. The Batavian coat of arms includes the Dutch Lion and seven arrows representing the Dutch provinces. The arms of the East India Company include a merman on the left and a mermaid with her mirror on the right. They frame a depiction of a sailing Dutch ship. Below the initials of the company is a display of military weapons and nautical instruments, which once again reference the apotropaic functions of the merpeople and the might of Dutch ships.

As a result of the popularity of this national symbol, the mermaid became a rather ubiquitous image in a variety of media. One of these media included tiles that were used for the decoration of house interiors. These ornaments are frequently included in Dutch domestic paintings. Some of these depictions would pair mermaids with male companions, as seen in a tile from the early seventeenth century (Fig. 11). Others would show the mermaid as a good mother carrying and nursing her baby. One can imagine that such tiles signified meanings like those already discussed. The mermaid could be seen as a protectress of the home, a symbol of female virtues, and a metaphor for the Republic.

The mermaid was also assimilated into the art of Dutch samplers, pieces of cloth with practice stitches, around the middle of the seventeenth century. Samplers were mostly created by young girls who were taught embroidery and darning skills at school. Therefore, alphabets were frequently included in early sampler design. Other links between education and these embroideries are found in the use of motifs and verses that often stem from contemporary schoolbooks. Obviously, the teaching of these skills was a desirable school subject for parents of young girls, especially because a few examples have been found of school mistresses in Amsterdam advertising the teaching of embroidery skills along with other academic subjects such as reading, writing, and languages.<sup>20</sup> And because these embroidery skills were learned at school, it appears that the Mermaid of Edam's story and the patriotic associations with mermaids may have been part of the curriculum. In this manner, this peculiar

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<sup>20</sup> Bix Schipper-van Lottum, *Over Merklappen Gesproken ... : De Geschiedenis Van De Nederlandse Merklap Vooral Belicht Vanuit Noord-Nederland* (Amsterdam: Wereldbibliotheek, 1980), 52.

hybrid creature became an unusual, but now actually understandable role model for the young sewers themselves due to her own legendary textile work.

Such associations are particularly found in a sampler dated 1665 by a twelve-year-old young woman named Maria Block (Fig. 12). At the upper left of the piece she stitches a large mermaid with green arms who holds a mirror and comb in her hands. This green color suggests that she knew about the legend of the Mermaid of Edam and her seaweed covering. Memories of the many printed images of the Mermaid spinning would have further related to the scene at the far right of the sampler. It depicts an ape, known for imitating human behavior, that also engages in the virtuous female task of spinning with a distaff. Such a motif accentuates this association with the Mermaid and her oft-represented profession. Other patriotic signifiers are also overtly represented on this sampler. In the center of the work, which functions almost like a framed painting, is a coat of arms tribute to her city, Amsterdam. As was previously mentioned, this booming mercantile city became a proud symbol of the Republic itself and its maritime power. Above this motif is her own family coat of arms – suggesting a kind of double pride for Block.

Below the Mermaid is another important national female symbol, who was known as the Maid of Holland, or *Hollandia*. She is depicted in a heroic, manly stance with one hand on her hip. In the other hand she wields a spear that is topped by a hat of liberty. This hat was a reference to an ancient signifier of freedom from Roman times that indicated the liberation of slaves. She is also situated in her fruitful Dutch Garden, which had become a metaphor of the Republic's prosperity. While a full discussion of *Hollandia*'s patriotic meaning is not possible here, it is important to realize how ubiquitous her image was from the start of the Revolt and continuing through the Golden Age and beyond. And like the Mermaid of Edam, she was depicted in a variety of media, including church stained glass and port sculpture.<sup>21</sup>

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**21** The Maid of Holland and the Dutch Garden are analyzed in W. A. Beelaerts van Blokland, "De oorsprong van den Hollandschen tuin," *De Nederlandsche Leeuw* 47 (1929): 3–12, 57–59, 115–18, 322–26; P. J. van Winter, "De Hollandse tuin," *Nederlands Kunsthistorisch Jaarboek* 8 (1957): 29–121; Carol Louise Janson, "The Birth of Dutch Liberty: Origins of the Pictorial Imagery," Ph.D. diss., University of Minnesota, 1982, 108–21; Arie Jan Gelderblom, *Mannen en maagden in Hollands tuin. Interpretatieve studies van Nederlandse letterkunde 1575–1781* (Amsterdam: Thesis Publishers, 1991; originally Proefschrift Rijksuniversiteit Utrecht); Catherine Levesque, *Journey through Landscape in Seventeenth-Century Holland: The Haarlem Print Series and Dutch Identity* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1994); Helmut Georg Koenigsberger, "Republicanism, Monarchism and Liberty," *Royal and Republican Sovereignty in Early Modern Europe: Essays in Memory of Ragnhild Hatton*, ed. Robert Oresko, G. C. Gibbs, and H. M. Scott (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997),

During the later decades of the sixteenth century, Hollandia came to symbolize the struggle for liberty against Spanish oppression. For example, she appears on coins presented as being enclosed in her garden and wearing the Hat of Liberty. While her protected status is indicated by the barricaded enclosure in such images, her temerity and bellicosity are also emphasized by her brandished sword. In this manner, she carries apotropaic signifiers for the Dutch hope of victory. Hollandia also frequently decorated the surfaces of protective fire backs, used to reflect heat from a fire, during the seventeenth century. In these reliefs, the bellicose Maid in her Dutch Garden boldly grasps a lance with the Hat of Liberty at its tip. The words *Pro Patria*, or “For the Fatherland,” are inscribed overhead. She wears the hat of a soldier, and her fierce companionate Dutch Lion has also become militarized as it brandishes a sword and clenches the seven arrows of the Republic. These objects of material culture would have been daily reminders of Dutch power and independence.

Opposite the figure of Hollandia on Block’s sampler is one more patriotic image celebrating the power and bounty of the Dutch Republic. It depicts the story told in Numbers 13:1–33 of the two Israelite spies, Joshua and Caleb, who carried back a cluster of large grapes held on a pole between them. The purpose of this brave mission was to convince the people that they should go and seize the Promised Land that was rightfully theirs. The Dutch, who frequently identified themselves with God’s ancient chosen people, saw this as a proud assertion of the blessings of their own prosperity.<sup>22</sup>

Beyond an association with these many patriotic signifiers, however, the dominating figure of the Mermaid of Edam is also significantly alluded to in this textile context as an example of female industry. Moreover, she becomes an important role model for young, Dutch women, like Block herself. For she was not only a proud signifier of the Republic, she was also an example of

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43–74. For an analysis of the visual imagery of the Maid of Holland, see Martha Moffitt Peacock, “The Maid of Holland and Her Heroic Heiresses,” *Women and Gender in the Early Modern Low Countries, 1500–1750*. ed. Sarah Moran and Amanda Pipkin. Studies in Medieval and Reformation Traditions, 217 (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2019), 68–127.

<sup>22</sup> Several historians have discussed the parallels drawn between the Dutch and the ancient Israelites, including Hendrik Smitskamp, *Calvinistisch nationaal besef in Nederland vóór het midden der 17de eeuw* (The Hague: D. A. Daamen, 1947), 13–19; Gerrit Groenhuis, *De Predikanten. De sociale positie van de gereformeerde predikanten in de Verenigde Nederlanden voor +/- 1700* (Groningen: Wolters-Noordhoff, 1977), 77–107; C. Huisman, *Neerlands Israël. Het natiebesef der traditioneel-gereformeerden in de achttiende eeuw* (Dordrecht: J. P. van den Tol, 1983); G. J. Schutte, *Het Calvinistisch Nederland* (Utrecht: Bijleveld, 1988); Paul Regan, “Calvinism and the Dutch Israel Thesis,” *Protestant History and Identity in Sixteenth-Century Europe*, ed. Bruce Gordon, Vol. 2: *The Later Reformation* (Aldershot: Scolar Press, 1996), 91–106.

Dutch female industry that was represented in so many of the genre scenes of the era. In Dutch society great import was given to mothers as caretakers and rulers of the household. Contemporary moralists like Jacob Cats encouraged women to supervise children and servants, and to control domestic expenses. Husbands were instructed to leave the household to the management of their wives. In fact, discussions of the household describe it as the *heerschappij* or dominion of women.<sup>23</sup> Johann van Beverwijk goes even further in his praise and exaltation of housewives. He firmly asserts the importance of family and home, proclaims the family to be the fountain and origin of a republic, and states one must augment and preserve the family as one would govern and protect a city or state. He also declares that the housewife's reliable actions help lay the foundation for a well-ordered society, he considers the housewife's power great, and he compares her domain to a kingdom.<sup>24</sup>

With these extraordinary attitudes toward contemporary women in mind, it is not surprising that midway through the seventeenth century, images of women in domestic settings became one of the most popular subjects in Dutch art. These images of the home rarely contain fathers, and when they are present, they are usually relegated to an insignificant position, often in the background, of the composition. Women dominate these scenes and they are frequently shown instructing children, servants, and vendors in their duties.

Women engaged in spinning, like the Mermaid of Edam, became one of the popular motifs in Dutch domestic imagery. These scenes have been linked to virtuous historical figures like Lucretia and the Virgin Mary.<sup>25</sup> In addition, several moralizing texts list spinning as one of the valued pursuits of women. A mid-seventeenth-century print by the woman artist Geertruydt Roghman (1625–ca. 1651) demonstrates this reverence for the act of spinning by women (Fig. 13). Roghman's monumental figure fills the engraving, as she tends to her child while busily spinning. The skeins, winder, pick, and spools used in her work indicate the reality of a domestic, spinning room setting. It has been

<sup>23</sup> Jacob Cats, *Alle de Wercken, So ouden als nieuwe, van de Heer Iacob Cats, Ridder, oudt Raedtpensionaris van Hollandt, &c.* (Amsterdam: Ian Iacobsz Schipper, 1655), *Houwelick*, 79.

<sup>24</sup> Johan van Beverwijk, *Van de Wtnementheyt des Vrouwelicken Geslachts Verciert met Historyen, ende kopere Platen; als oock Latijnsche, ende Nederlansche Verssen van Mr. Corn. Boy*, vol. 2 (1639; Dordrecht: Hendrick van Esch, 1643), 209–11.

<sup>25</sup> Eddy de Jongh and Ger Luijten discuss spinning as a symbol of virtue, and they further reference prescriptive texts that laud the act of spinning in *Mirror of Everyday Life: Genreprints in the Netherlands, 1550–1700* (Amsterdam: Rijksmuseum; Ghent: Snoeck-Ducaju & Zoon, 1997), 268–71.

suggested that women were no longer employed in the spinning trade by the early modern era.<sup>26</sup> However, in the booming textile economy of the Republic, rural women were still significantly involved in spinning to supplement the family income.<sup>27</sup> Therefore, the emphasis on the woman's industry in this print also probably invoked associations with women's importance to the Dutch economy. Furthermore, the woman's common dress associates her with a class that would have been engaged in such labor.

The production of textiles by women was not an insignificant financial component in the Republic, where all family members usually contributed to material necessities. In some cases, female textile workers were able to work outside the regulations of the guild, while others formed their own subdivision of male guilds. Therefore, it is essential to recognize that even domestic labor had a public economic corollary.<sup>28</sup>

During the economic growth of the seventeenth century, greater numbers of women also began to participate more publicly in the textile industry as guild members. Recent research indicates that during the seventeenth century there were no formal prohibitions to women joining guilds and thus working in professions.<sup>29</sup> Women's participation in industry was particularly significant in the case of Leiden, a city which became the world's largest textile producer during the first half of the seventeenth century. Furthermore, historians have begun observing that the large economic boom of the Dutch Golden Age was greatly

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**26** Cordula Grewe, "Shaping Reality through the Fictive: Images of Women Spinning in the Northern Renaissance," *RACAR, Revue d'art canadienne / Canadian Art Review*, 1/2 (1992): 6–19.

**27** Elise van Nederveen Meerkerk, "Segmentation in the Pre-Industrial Labour Market: Women's Work in the Dutch Textile Industry, 1580–1810," *IRSH, International Review of Social History*, 51 (2006): 189–216.

**28** Bibi Sara Panhuysen, *Maatwerk: Kleermakers, Naaisters, Oudkleerkopers en de gilden (1500–1800)* (Utrecht: University of Utrecht, 2000). In an earlier article, I discussed the importance of women's economic roles as represented in textile manufacturing and market scenes. See Martha Moffitt Peacock, "Early Modern Dutch Women in the City: The Imaging of Economic Agency and Power," *Urban Space in the Middle Ages and the Early Modern Age*, ed. Albrecht Classen. *Fundamentals of Medieval and Early Modern Culture*, 4 (Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2009), 667–711.

**29** Ariadne Schmidt, "Gilden en de toegang van vrouwen tot de arbeidsmarkt in Holland in de vroegmoderne tijd," *De Zeventiende Eeuw* 23.2 (2007): 160–78; Ariadne Schmidt, "Vrouwenarbeid in de vroegmoderne tijd in Nederland," *Tijdschrift voor sociale en economische geschiedenis* 2 (2005): 2–21; and Manon van der Heijden and Ariadne Schmidt, "In dienst van de stad. Vrouwen in stedelijke ambten, Holland 1500–1800," *Tijdschrift voor sociale en economische geschiedenis* 4 (2007): 3–34.

enhanced by the labor contribution of women.<sup>30</sup> Reciprocally, it has been noted that women were significantly aided in terms of job opportunities resulting from this prosperity. For example, the number of women working in public mills, such as the Leiden Lakenhal, significantly increased during this era.<sup>31</sup>

A realization of female economic significance in relation to textile production is witnessed in an anonymous Netherlandish allegorical painting from the first half of the seventeenth century entitled the *Struggle for Daily Bread*, where women with distaffs compete with men wielding the tools of blacksmiths, fishermen, soldiers, cobblers, tailors, bakers, and the like for their portion of economic prosperity, symbolized by bread in a large sack. The centrally placed bread sack is surrounded by combatants wielding their professional tools in a threatening manner. Particularly prominent are the women with distaffs at the top of the encircling horde.

Applying these valued domestic and economic associations to the Mermaid of Edam saga allows for a fuller explanation of her enduring legacy. The constant reimagining of the Mermaid as a spinner dovetailed with the new Dutch celebration of women's contributions to the Republic in both moral and economic terms. She became a virtuous example of valued female industry in a middle-class society that promoted hard work. Furthermore, her conversion to Christianity made her less of a fearsome and bestial creature and more of a miraculous creation of God in Dutch Calvinist culture.<sup>32</sup> The embracing of this creature by Dutch citizenry was also probably aided by her many representations in human form. By these humanizing processes, she could function as a more appropriate role model for Dutch women. And her associations with contemporary women's work are made evident by her representation on samplers.

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**30** Leo Noordegraaf and Jan Luiten van Zanden. "Early Modern Economic Growth and the Standard of Living: Did Labor Benefit from Holland's Golden Age?" *A Miracle Mirrored: The Dutch Republic in European Perspective*, ed. Karel Davids and Jan Lucassen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 410–37; here 426.

**31** Elise van Nederveen Meerkerk discusses the many female laborers in the textile industry and the gendered aspects of the work. She demonstrates that gender relations in these professions were not static but changing. She also notes that when there was an upswing in the economy, there was a rise in the number of female laborers and greater job opportunities for women. "Segmentation in the Pre-Industrial Labor Market"; and "Textile Worker, Gender, and the Organization of Production in the Pre-Industrial Dutch Republic," both in *Practices of Gender in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe*, ed. Megan Cassidy-Welch and Peter Sherlock. *Late Medieval and Early Modern Studies*, 11 (Turnhout: Brepols), 215–34.

**32** For a parallel phenomenon in late medieval German literature where the monsters have basically lost their threatening character, see the contribution to this volume by Siegfried Christoph.



In addition to representing these important national virtues of work and religiosity, the Mermaid inspired a whole host of other patriotic associations. From the outset of her story, she brought fame to the northern Netherlands because of her fantastic origins, very similar to the mythical figure Melusine and her association with the dynasty of the Lusignans, as discussed by Jean d'Arras (1393), Couldrette (1400), and Thüring von Ringoltingen (1456). Her legendary status spread from the cities of Edam and Haarlem throughout the Netherlands and even to foreign countries. This fame is demonstrated through the numerous textual and visual references to her throughout the early modern era. The continued interest in, and elaboration on, this legend was obviously meant to establish a unifying and epic Dutch tradition while also engendering patriotic fervor in the founding of the new Republic.

The various visual and textual interpretations of the Edam legend, and of mermaids generally, helped shape the collective memory of this society.<sup>33</sup> In addition, these memories were also highly influenced by certain aspects of Dutch identity. Furthermore, it is obvious that these memories permeated all levels of society by using a variety of media for diverse practical and political purposes. These memories could be linked to civic patriotism, or they could be employed as promoters of early national agendas. Of relevance for this study is the fact that the media of the era kept mermaids in constant discourse during the Golden Age. Images of these creatures found on prominent public display or in the constant recirculation of books, prints, and maps ensured a cultural tradition that associated them with positive characteristics such as industry, religiosity, protection, maritime power, and even national prominence. This mythologized visual history, however, became actual historical memory for the citizenry of the seventeenth century as they continuously recounted the Edam

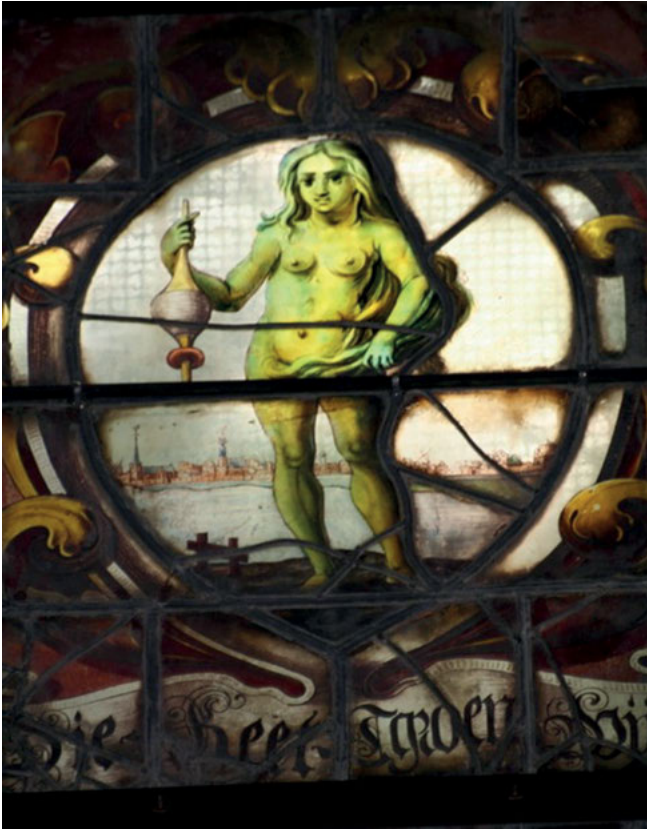
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<sup>33</sup> Maurice Halbwachs was one of the most significant theorists on collective memory. His contributions have been gathered, translated, and summarized in the following texts: Maurice Halbwachs and Mary Douglas, *The Collective Memory*, trans. Francis J. Ditter Jr. and Vida Yazdi Ditter (1950; New York: Harper and Row, 1980); *The Collective Memory Reader*, ed. Jeffrey K. Olick, Vered Vinitzky-Seroussi, and Daniel Levy (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011). Other important contributors to the discussion on collective memory include Émile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*, trans. Joseph Ward Swain (1915; London: G. Allen & Unwin, 1968); Aleida Assmann, *Erinnerungsräume: Formen und Wandlungen des kulturellen Gedächtnisses* (Munich: C. H. Beck, 1999); Jan Assmann, *Das kulturelle Gedächtnis: Schrift, Erinnerung und politische Identität in frühen Hochkulturen* (Munich: C. H. Beck, 1992). Aleida Assmann and Jan Assmann have been particularly important for their theories on cultural memory. Theirs is an interdisciplinary approach that unites the study of cultural objects with an understanding of how collective identity is formulated and how political legitimacy is established.

legend. Hence, the durability of this fantastic saga appears to have stemmed from the Mermaid's ability to inspire valued aspects of Dutch identity, while also becoming an apotropaic symbol of power for the Republic.



**Fig. 1:** Anonymous, *Mermaid of Edam*, from the small or Onze Lieve Vrouwe Kerk in Edam, ca. 1550; Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam (with permission)



**Fig. 2:** Anonymous, *Mermaid of Edam*, in the large or Sint Nicolaaskerk in Edam, early seventeenth century (with permission); <http://www.verhalenbank.nl/files/show/2395>



**Fig. 3:** Anonymous, *Tympanum with the Mermaid of Edam*, 1784; Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam (with permission)





**Fig. 5:** Anonymous after a painting at the Prinsenhof in Edam, *Mermaid of Edam*, 1784–1786; Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam (with permission)



**Fig. 6:** Claes Jansz Visscher II, *Mermaid of Edam and other Legends*; illustration from a map of Holland, ca. 1610; Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam (with permission)



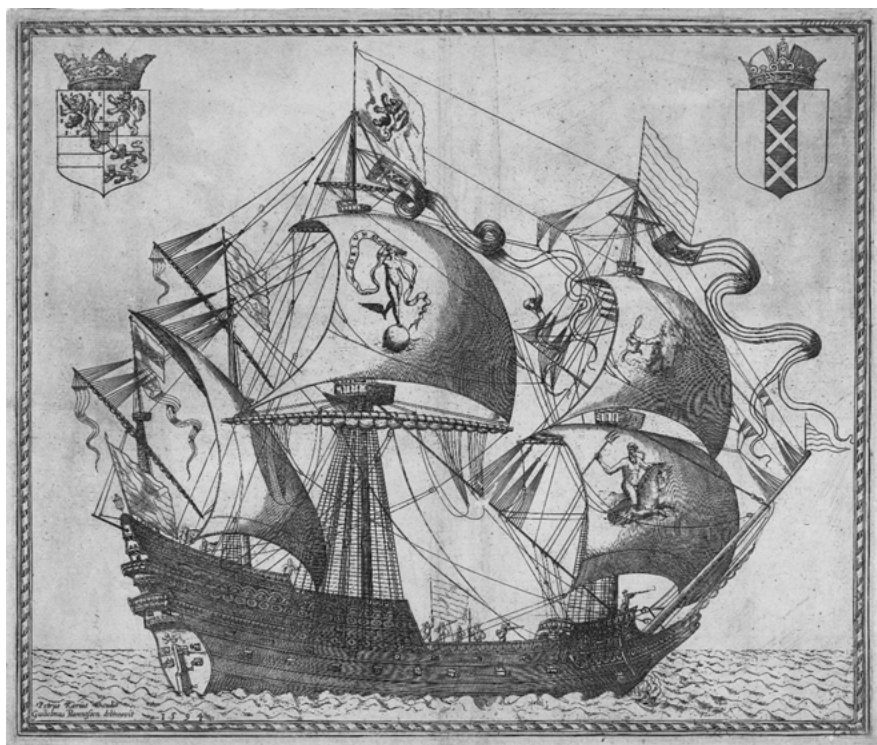
**Fig. 7:** Anonymous, *Mermaid of Edam*, book illustration from Caspar Wachtendorp, *De Oude Hollandsche Geschiedenissen Ofte, Korte Hollandsche Rym-Kronyck Verdeylt in 14. Poëtische Boecken, Beginnende Van De Sunt Vloet, Ende Eyndigende Met D'Beginnelsen Vanden Tegenwoordigen Oorlogh Inde Nederlanden, Ontrent 'T Jaer 1560*, 1645; Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam (with permission)





**Fig. 8:** Published by Nicolaes Visscher I, *Map of the Province of Holland*, in or after 1660–1677; Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam (with permission)





**Fig. 9:** Anonymous printmaker after Willem Barendsz, *The Amsterdam Ship Fortuna*, 1594; Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam (with permission)



**Fig. 10:** J. Becx de Jonge, *The Arms of the Dutch East India Company and of the Town of Batavia*, 1651; Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam (with permission)



**Fig. 11:** Anonymous, *Mermaid with Man*, early seventeenth century; Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam (with permission)



Fig. 12: Maria Block, *Sampler*, 1665; Amsterdams Historisch Museum, Amsterdam (with permission)



**Fig. 13:** Geertruydt Roghman, *Woman Spinning and Child*, ca. 1648; Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam (with permission)

John Pizer

## Dream and Prophetic Projection in Andreas Gryphius's Historical Tragedies: Traces of the Symbol

According to noted French fantasy author and critic Charles Nodier's seminal essay from 1830 on "The Fantastic in Literature," the use of fantasy and imagination in poetic works begins after mankind's early primitive phase, when sensate discovery, the attempt to articulate the experience of the material world, was transcended and humanity sought to understand the occult laws that governed the universe. This yearning for transcendent knowledge is at the core of religion, which seeks to understand the divine and must therefore go beyond the merely empirical.

Nodier argues that the fantastic disappeared after the Middle Ages, but that the marvelous reappeared in the Romantic age of which he was a contemporary. He found this was the case particularly in Germany, because this land, "blessed with a particular system of moral organization, carries in its beliefs a fervor of imagination, a vivacity of sentiment, a mysticism of doctrine, and a universal penchant for idealism that are fundamental to fantastic poetry."<sup>1</sup> The German Baroque poet Andreas Gryphius (1616–1664) can be said to belong to the rich Teutonic tradition described by Nodier, even if he lived in an epoch situated between the Middle Ages and nineteenth-century German Romanticism. His poetry and theatrical pieces are redolent with the fantastic imaginative tableaux Nodier associates with early religious texts.

Yet, how are we to analyze his historical tragedies in the context of the fantastic and imaginative, given that he was dealing with actual episodes from the past? After all, Gryphius was not working in the genre of alternative history fiction, which draws on personages and events from the past, but consciously creates outcomes contrary to what factually transpired, for example, constellating tableaux which project the continuation of the German Democratic Republic into the twenty-first century.<sup>2</sup> Such alternative history fiction is evident in

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<sup>1</sup> Charles Nodier, "The Fantastic in Literature," trans. Daniela Ginsburg, *PMLA* 134.3 (2019): 542–54; here 551.

<sup>2</sup> This is the case with two recent works of German fiction: Simon Urban, *Plan D* (Frankfurt a. M.: Schöffling, 2011), and Thomas Brussig, *Das gibt es in keinem Russenfilm* (Frankfurt a. M.: Fischer, 2015).

contemporary German literature,<sup>3</sup> but Gryphius draws on highly imaginative, supernatural elements to conjure factual historical episodes.

## The Fantastic in Gryphius's Historical Tragedies: Allegory and Symbol

Gryphius creates fantastic, imaginative tableaux in his poetry and plays through the prolific use of allegory and symbol. Allegory and symbol are the two fundamental modes of signifying that enable the representation of the supernatural, indeed the imaginative, according to Jane Brown. In her book *The Persistence of Allegory* (2007), Brown indicates that allegory is the tool by means of which the supernatural can be imaginatively portrayed. It is the dominant mode of signification prior to the period of Enlightenment, when the embrace of mimesis, with its focus on imitating the sensually perceptible world, begins to compete with it. In other words, allegory, but also symbol, are the fundamental tools through which writers can portray events and tableaux associated with imagination, indeed with the fantastic, rather than with realism.

In the following essay, I will examine how particularly symbols are manifest in the highly imaginative, often fantastic, worlds created by Gryphius in his historical tragedies. I will show that, contrary to the opinion by Walter Benjamin (1892–1940), whose views on this matter have achieved canonic status, the symbolic as much as the allegorical plays a seminal role in Gryphius's tragedies in evoking highly imaginative, indeed, fantastic tableaux still rooted in the facts of history.

Particularly since Benjamin's *Ursprung des deutschen Trauerspiels* (*Origin of the German Tragic Drama*, 1928) began to exercise a seminal influence on studies of German Baroque drama, scholars have highlighted allegory as the overarching representational mode of this genre. From this perspective, tragedy during this literary period eschews the symbol, employed to conjure a transcendent unity between aesthetic appearance and external facticity, between representational status and objective reality, even though that reality might be projected into the future. Bridging past and future, the symbol thus evokes a mode of transcendent timelessness. Allegory, by contrast, suggests a postlapsarian fallen human domain in which such continuity is effectively cancelled.

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<sup>3</sup> See Ingo Cornils, "Utopian, Dystopian and Subversive Strategies in Recent German Alternate History Fictions," *Collision of Realities: Establishing Research on the Fantastic in Europe*, ed. Lars Schmeink and Astrid Böger. (Berlin and Boston: Walter de Gruyter, 2012), 325–38.

In conjuring a shattered, ruined world, allegory breaks the prelapsarian link between signifier and signified, representational form and represented content. In his early (1916) essay “Über Sprache überhaupt und über die Sprache des Menschen” (On Language as Such and on the Language of Man), Benjamin posits a paradisiac (prelapsarian) period prior to the fall of mankind from grace, a fall brought about when Adam and Eve ate from the Tree of Knowledge. In this prelapsarian period, Benjamin articulates an immediate link between word and object, a singular divine language where no separation between the verbal and the sensual existed. In later work, Benjamin comes to associate the attempt nostalgically to evoke this wholistic world with the symbol, while he finds that allegory is resolutely rooted in the period after the fall from grace, the postlapsarian age which continues today, when words are no longer divine and the relationship between signifier and signified is arbitrary. To highlight this disjunction, Benjamin focused in his œuvre on modes of experiencing such as dream and melancholic reflections that are seen to disrupt attempts at establishing symbolic continuity and found the Baroque mourning plays of Andreas Gryphius exemplary in this regard.

My essay will argue that Gryphius employs fantasy and imagination in the dream sequences and visionary moments of his historical tragedies, but their prophetic projection into a realized future, the link between dream and history, must constellate the trace of a symbolic, indeed ontic link between on-stage present-moment reverie and a historic reality (albeit a reality somewhat altered to fit the needs of Gryphius's political and dramaturgic proclivities) which will take place during or shortly after the dramatic time frame.

The following work is divided into three sections. In the first, I will examine the disjunction established by Benjamin and his contemporaries between symbol and allegory in their critical writings on the Baroque *Trauerspiel*, with a focus on how they articulate allegory as the privileged representational mode employed, in their view, by Baroque dramatists in general and Gryphius in particular. We will see that their characterization of the symbol evokes properties in this signifying approach that are, in fact, to be found in Gryphius's historical tragedies if the symbol is indeed to be characterized as a dramaturgic and poetic tool linking representation to a factual realization, where the dramatic present foretells events that will occur in a future anterior. The future anterior signals something will have happened, as in the sentence: “By tomorrow, I will have arrived in Rome.” In the case of Gryphius, the future anterior presages an event that historically will transpire, and thus will have taken place before this Baroque author wrote his plays. For example, the historical Catherine of Georgia

(1565–1624) was martyred, and Gryphius foreshadows that this will occur in his play on this queen. After all, Gryphius's historical tragedies are, of course, based on events that took place in the distant past or at a time closer to the period in which Gryphius wrote.

Gryphius deliberately creates a transcendent link between onstage past and a point in time when what is prophesied in onstage dialogs, monologs, stage settings, and emblems, even when such prophecies are evoked through verbal and physical representations couched in fantasy and imagination, will become reality. To be more precise, Gryphius uses fantasy and imaginative figures such as ghosts, the flames of Hell, and supernatural martyrdom to persuade his viewers through Baroque extravagance of the cogency of his Protestant providential interpretation of actual historical events. Thus, Gryphius uses the stage to project a vision of the afterlife rooted in his poetic imagination, but which many Protestants at the time would have accepted as realistic. The next section will examine recent analyses of the distinction between allegory and symbol, with a primary focus on critical works among the deluge of scholarship written on Benjamin since the 1980s which focus attention on his distinction between these fundamental representational modes.

Finally, in the longest portion of this essay, I will look closely at the dreams, visions, and prophecies in Gryphius's historical tragedies to elucidate what I will refer to as traces of the symbol in these plays. They will be examined in the chronological order of their publication, with the exception that one historical tragedy which exists in two versions separated by six years will be treated contiguously. The order is as follows: *Leo Armenius* (1650), *Catharina von Georgien* (Catharina of Georgia, 1657), *Carolus Stuardus* (first version 1657, second version 1663), and *Papinianus* (1659).

## Symbol and Allegory in the Baroque *Trauerspiel*: Benjamin and His Contemporaries

Prior to discussing symbol and allegory in Benjamin's *Trauerspiel* book, it is worthwhile to examine briefly Benjamin's first substantial exegesis of the symbol in his essay "Goethes *Wahlverwandschaften*" (Goethe's *Elective Affinities*, 1924–1925). Goethe's novel is tragic in that its married couples, through the chemical attraction suggested by its title, are fated to suffer destructive heterosexual passion for two individuals outside of their nuptial bond. This passion has negative consequences for all concerned, and Goethe's late novel implies this catastrophe is ineluctable. In Benjamin's interpretation of this work, only a



star foreshadows positive fulfillment: “Denn unter dem Symbol des Sterns war einst Goethe die Hoffnung erschienen, die er für die Liebenden fassen mußte”<sup>4</sup> (“For only under the symbol of the star did the hope at one time appear which Goethe had to hold out for the lovers”). Benjamin cites a sentence from the novel in which a falling star is rendered as a simile for hope. Also citing Friedrich Hölderlin, Benjamin claims the symbolic star functions as a caesura here that suspends the flow of the narrative (“alles inne hält”), but also seals the end of the embracing lovers (I.1: 199–200). In his interpretation of this passage in an essay on “Benjamin’s Modernity,” Andrew Benjamin argues that the temporal rupture generated by the caesura also creates a fissure between the symbol and what it symbolizes as (he implies) between the temporal and the eternal.

Given that Benjamin begins in the *Trauerspiel* book to situate the unbreakable bond between signifier and signified, and between the fallen, time-bound world and the infinite absolute as vested in the symbol, while articulating allegory as evocative of rupture or “caesura” between these antinomic couplings, Andrew Benjamin is correct to note with respect to the *Elective Affinities* essay that “at this stage in Benjamin’s development, he is yet to formulate a sustained distinction between symbol and allegory.”<sup>5</sup>

I would argue that Benjamin’s lack of differentiation between symbol and allegory with respect to the caesura at the close of Goethe’s novel, points to an entanglement of the two heuristic devices in the *Trauerspiel* book and, as well, in later scholarship on Benjamin’s monograph, but that this entanglement is productive for a reading of Gryphius which seeks to elucidate the traces of the symbol in his historical tragedies.

This is not to say that Benjamin does not attempt to explicate detailed, careful distinctions between symbol and allegory in the *Trauerspiel* book in the mourning plays he examines. Rather, it allows us to establish both a link between symbol and prophecy in Gryphius’s historical tragedies and, concomitantly, to underscore that caesural ruptures are not inevitably vested purely in allegoric praxis. In sealing the lovers’ fate in Benjamin’s reading of *Elective Affinities*, it can also be said that the symbolic star prophecies their doom, much as fantasy and imagination prophecy historical events in Gryphius’s Baroque dramas concerning well-known personages, mostly kings, queens, and emperors, from the near and distant past.

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4 Walter Benjamin, “Goethes Wahlverwandtschaften,” *Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. I.1, ed. Rolf Tiedemann and Hermann Schweppenhäuser (Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 1974), 123–201; here 199. All citations from Benjamin’s German work are taken from this volume and subsequently given in the body of the text. All translations from the German are my own unless otherwise indicated.

5 Andrew Benjamin, “Benjamin’s Modernity,” *The Cambridge Companion to Walter Benjamin*, ed. David S. Ferris (Cambridge, New York, et al.: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 97–114; here 98.

Just as Goethe's star in Benjamin's essay on *Elective Affinities* "can be read as a symbol that alludes to a domain situated beyond the work of art," as Sigrid Weigel notes,<sup>6</sup> so the prophetic dreams and visions in Gryphius's historical tragedies point to a soon-to-be-realized actuality that will take place at a future moment sometimes just beyond the narrative time frame. Goethe himself wrote that symbolic experience is transmuted into ideas and ideas become images.<sup>7</sup>

In his historical tragedies, Gryphius draws on real-life courtly and ecclesiastic chronicled experience to transform his ideas and ideals – the divine sanction of royal governance, the innate, transcendent justice of Christianity, the transformative power of martyrdom – into the richly-textured, sensual, often static (from a dramaturgic point of view) imagery that Benjamin, his contemporaries, and current scholars of his work tend to associate with allegory. There is justification for this tendency even in a Goethean reading of allegory by virtue of the circumstance that for Goethe the image held by this idea remains both eternally effective but always unattainable ("immer unendlich wirksam und unerreichbar bleibt") while allegory fixes its image into a comprehensive, limited and fully expressible concept.<sup>8</sup> However, as we will see, Gryphius imbues his historical tragedies with the ethos of ideals unattainable for all but the most elevated of humankind by fusing their experiences with imaginative fantasy and dream-induced projection invested with the ambience of prophetic vision. It is only with the advent of Gotthold Ephraim Lessing's eighteenth-century drama and dramaturgy that German tragedy literally comes down to earth, fully relatable for a middle-class audience which can completely identify with doomed but not immortally transmogrified figures who are neither royal nor aristocratic. Such figures in seventeenth-century German Baroque mourning plays rise above earthly limitations through transcendent martyrdom attainable, in Gryphius's dramatic world, almost exclusively to royal figures such as Charles Stewart and Catharina of Georgia.

In his essay on "Benjamin's Theory of Allegory," Bainard Cowan argues that "allegory is experience *par excellence*: it discloses the truth of the world far more than the fleeting glimpses of wholeness attained in the Romantic

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<sup>6</sup> Sigrid Weigel, "The Artwork as Breach of a Beyond: On the Dialectic of Divine and Human Order in Walter Benjamin's 'Goethe's Elective Affinities,'" *Walter Benjamin and Romanticism*, ed. Beatrice Hanssen and Andrew Benjamin (New York and London: Continuum, 2002), 197–206; here 199.

<sup>7</sup> See the discussion in Simon Brittan, *Poetry, Symbol, and Allegory: Interpreting Metaphorical Language from Plato to the Present* (Charlottesville, VA, and London: University of Virginia Press, 2003), 170–71.

<sup>8</sup> Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, cited in Rainer Nägele, *Theater, Theory Speculation: Walter Benjamin and the Scenes of Modernity* (Baltimore, MD, and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991), 214, n. 15.

symbol.”<sup>9</sup> Benjamin argues in the *Trauerspiel* book that the truth of the postlapsarian profane world in Baroque mourning plays such as those by Gryphius can only be discerned as broken, shattered, and incohesive, imbued by melancholy. However, prophetic projection does allow Gryphius's eponymous protagonists to emerge with larger-than-life symbolic wholeness glimpsed in a future anterior conjuration/conjugation of history. His plays move toward a climax that reflects what took place in history, and his educated audience realizes that the tragic martyrdoms portrayed have in fact transpired and will be acted out on stage. The transfiguration of the title characters invests them with a saintly character, which allows them to transcend their earthly foibles and to be invested with a transformative holistic pathos.

There have been numerous attempts to distinguish between the terms “symbol” and “allegory.” Broadly speaking, particularly since Romanticism but even according to traditional scriptural interpretation, allegory is a technique whereby an image signifies a concept, an ideal, or even a transfiguration, but is also firmly rooted in what is traditionally associated with the image. It has a stable, fixed meaning. A hen might allegorically stand in for motherhood while remaining a female chicken. Through custom, the hen has come to allegorize all forms of motherhood, including human maternalism. Paraphrasing Goethe, Simon Brittan notes that “what is expressed by the image in allegory is not a nebulous idea or feeling, but something ‘defined and expressible.’”<sup>10</sup> The symbol, on the other hand, has a transcendent nuance, pointing toward a totality not epistemologically graspable given humanity's cognitive limitations.

Symbols are frequently regarded as incommensurate with the concrete world in that they are seen to express their very inexpressibility, as with Goethe's star in *Elective Affinities*. Nevertheless, in symbology, there can be an intuitable link between external phenomena (such as the Goethean star) and a noumenal idea/ideal. There have been, of course, numerous critical attempts to distinguish between allegory and symbol. In what follows, I adhere to Benjamin's own controversial but influential distinctions between these two modes of expression to show that much of Gryphius's figuration is symbolic *according to the distinctions Benjamin himself established*. In other words, a truly Benjaminian reading of Gryphius shows the traces of the symbol in his metaphoric language; if one is critically faithful to Benjamin's contrast between symbol and allegory, Gryphius's historical tragedies can be revealed as redolent with symbolic imagery.

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<sup>9</sup> Bainard Cowan, “Walter Benjamin's Theory of Allegory,” *New German Critique* 22 (1981): 109–22; here 112.

<sup>10</sup> Brittan, *Poetry, Symbol, and Allegory* (see note 7), 171.

Benjamin's most significant commentary on allegory in Baroque mourning plays in the *Trauerspiel* book is to be found in the section entitled "Allegorie und Trauerspiel" ("Allegory and Trauerspiel"). His most widely-cited distinction between symbol and allegory in this portion of his monograph is as follows:

Während im Symbol mit der Verklärung des Unterganges das transfigurierte Antlitz der Natur im Lichte der Erlösung flüchtig sich offenbart, liegt in der Allegorie die *facies hippocratica* der Geschichte als erstarrte Landschaft dem Betrachter vor Augen. Die Geschichte in allem was sie als Unzeitiges, Leidvolles, Verfehltes von Beginn an hat, prägt sich in einem Antlitz – nein, in einem Totenkopfe aus. (I.1, 343)

[Whereas in the symbol destruction is idealized and the transfigured face of nature is fleetingly revealed in the light of redemption, in allegory the observer is confronted with the *facies hippocratica* of history as petrified, primordial landscape. Everything about history that, from the very beginning, has been untimely, sorrowful, unsuccessful, is expressed in a face – or rather in a death's head.]<sup>11</sup>

In articulating the symbol as capable of revealing transfigured nature for a fleeting moment, Benjamin may have had Goethe's *Elective Affinities* in mind, where he discerned the star glowing above the ill-fated embracing lovers as a nature-generated glimpse of ultimate redemption when the novel's plot itself is veering toward tragedy. Certainly, death heads litter the stage of Baroque dramas and are featured in these works' emblematic representations as well; Gryphius's historical tragedies are no exception. However, ultimate redemption such as that signaled by the symbolic star in Benjamin's reading of Goethe's late novel is also evident in such works as Gryphius's *Catharina von Georgien* in the guise of dream and imaginative but historically-grounded prophecy. It is also negatively evident in the living but tormented face of Catharina's murderer, Persian King Chach Abas, while his henchmen turn the Georgian queen into a transfigured martyr as they torture her to death.

Benjamin's contrasts between symbol and allegory subsequent to this seminal and celebrated distinction at the outset of the chapter on allegory and *Trauerspiel* are consistent with this opening gambit. The symbol, associated by Benjamin with Romanticism, evokes the ambience of an organic totality. It is grounded in an adherence to the infinite and to formal perfection. Romanticism and Classicism tend to be characterized as antinomic with respect to their views on aesthetics, and Benjamin recognizes this tendency, but regards the Baroque rather than Romanticism as Classicism's true opposite (I.1, 352/*OGT*, 176). Thus, Rainer Nägele is correct to characterize the literary pursuit of

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<sup>11</sup> Walter Benjamin, *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*, trans. John Osborne (London: NLB [New Left Books], 1977), 166. All translations of Benjamin's *Ursprung des deutschen Trauerspiels* are taken from this work, which is hereafter cited in the body of the text as *OGT*.

harmony, unity, and continuity as consistent, in Benjamin's view, with "the ideal of the classic-Romantic symbol" which conceals ruptures and fissures through its seductive persuasiveness.<sup>12</sup>

Allegory, by contrast, which Benjamin regards as the formal structuring principle of the Baroque mourning play, is amorphous, fragmentary, evocative of ruin and transience on stage and in poetic verse. Allegory's concrete facticity – opposite to the symbol's evanescent idealism – promotes an ambience of heaviness akin to deadness. However, Benjamin explains the redemptive, transfigured atmosphere constellated at the conclusion of works such as Gryphius's *Catharina von Georgien* as consistent with Baroque allegory. Indeed, at the close to the *Trauerspiel* book he uses the term "Allegorie der Auferstehung" ("Allegory of Resurrection"). A complete reversal takes place, and all that the Baroque mourning play associated with the profane world as constellated through allegory – transitoriness, arbitrariness, the fragmentary, dispersion – is turned on its head with melancholic allegoric immersion when allegory finds itself no longer "spielerisch in erdhafter Dingwelt sondern ernsthaft unterm Himmel" ("not playfully in the earthly world of things, but seriously under the eyes of heaven" [I.1, 406/OGT, 232]).

What Benjamin does not acknowledge here is that what he sees as allegorical right up to the mourning play's denouement is transformed, in the infinite, perfect, harmonious resurrection in heaven afforded this genre's heroes, into the realm of the symbol. Herein lies the seductiveness for his contemporary audience of Gryphius's Christian vision, a vision redolent with the unity and perfection Nägele associates with the symbol in his reading of Benjamin. However, we will see that there are traces of the symbolic order in Gryphius's historical tragedies well before their denouements.

In interpreting the Baroque *Trauerspiel* through allegoresis, Benjamin turns at key moments to Gryphius's œuvre. He cites Gryphius as exemplary of the tendency among some Baroque authors to draw upon allegoric perspective in unexpected places. Benjamin explores the use of demolished language ("zertrümmerte Spache") that no longer serves a purely communicative function. This language, by tending toward the allegorical, comes to be informed by a discrete stateliness. As fundamentally concretized, Benjamin implies, this language acquires dignity ("Würde") equal to those allegorical nature-based objects such as gods, rivers, and virtues.

In such works as *Leo Armenius*, according to Benjamin, passionate, often antagonistic dialogue leads to the piling up of fragmented parts of speech –

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12 Nägele, *Theater, Theory, Speculation* (see note 8), xvii.

“Häufungen zerstückter Redeteile” – in greater measure in Gryphius than is the case with later writers (I.1: 382–83/*OGT*, 208–09). As noted, Benjamin characterizes such putatively chaotic and fragmentary speech as a fundamental element in theatrical allegoresis, but here rhetorical style is harnessed to illustrate a preference for allegory over symbol, whereas these tools are normally treated as competing modes of signification. As Cowan notes, symbols attempt to bridge the gap between “the world of phenomena” and “the realm of the ideas.”<sup>13</sup>

While fragmentary dialogue is consistent with the fractured relationship between signifier and signified in allegoresis, the use of techniques such as stichomythia and incomplete sentences does not preclude a symbolic relationship between phenomenal and noumenal realms. Nor does the piling up of corpses in *Papinianus* and other plays by Gryphius underscored by Benjamin (I.1: 392–93/*OGT*, 218–19) preclude symbolic signification, although they clearly contribute to the lifeless material density Benjamin associates with Baroque allegoresis. For the spirits that had inhabited the once-living bodies can be resurrected and thereby undergo symbolic transfiguration. As Benjamin himself acknowledges, this does indeed take place at the conclusion to some Baroque mourning plays, but he sees this as consistent with allegoresis. I would argue this is not the case, as will be evident in my discussion of Gryphius’s historical tragedies in the longest section of the present essay.

Scholars contemporary to Benjamin had more nuanced views on the relationship between symbol and allegory in the Baroque drama. In his introduction to a collection of works from the period including *Papinianus* and Gryphius’s popular, non-historic drama *Cardenio und Celinde* (1647), Willi Flemming argues that “the Silesian art drama” (*Das schlesische Kunstdrama*, the title of his collection) cannot be regarded as symbolic because the plots in the group of plays are not characterized by a content which illuminates everything from within, constituting an organic center like the body’s beating heart. However, the plot of the Silesian art drama is also not purely allegoric, meaning, in Flemming’s view, that it is not simply a pure cipher with an arbitrary relationship to something discrete from it and merely intended (“bloß ‘Gemeintes’”).<sup>14</sup> In a study on the “Barock als Gestaltung antithetischen Lebensgefühls” (Baroque as the configuration of antithetical life feelings), Arthur Hübscher finds both the timelessly valid symbols he

<sup>13</sup> Cowan, “Walter Benjamin’s Theory of Allegory” (see note 9), 111.

<sup>14</sup> Willi Flemming, “Einführung: Theater und Kultur im 17. Jahrhundert,” *Das schlesische Kunstdrama*, ed. Willi Flemming. Deutsche Literatur: Sammlung literarischer Kunst- und Kulturdenkmäler in Entwicklungsreihen. 13: Barock: Barockdrama, Vol. 1 (Leipzig: Reclam, 1930), 5–54; here 27.

associates with myth and the allegoric formulas of random qualities he associates with mythology in the work of the period. In Gryphius, there is a distinct separation between the concrete phenomenal world and the “ideal” world of causes and meanings, but Hübscher implies that both realms, respectively the allegoric and the symbolic, are present in the Baroque playwright's work.<sup>15</sup>

Citing scholars contemporary to Benjamin such as Flemming and Hübscher, upon whose work Benjamin draws in his *Trauerspiel* book, is not intended to question Benjamin's seminal contribution to Baroque studies in elucidating the overwhelming instigation of allegoresis in the period's mourning plays. Rather, it is intended to show how prior to the 1980s, when the *Trauerspiel* book began to exert an enormous influence on scholarship of the period, studies tended to discern a balance between the presence of the symbolic and the allegoric in dramas such as those of Gryphius. This balance continued into the years before Benjamin's canonic status became firmly established in the latter decades of the twentieth century, resulting in work that sometimes challenged Benjamin's insistence that allegoresis is so dominant in Baroque imaginative figuration that it can even be discerned in supernatural, metaphysical, fantasy-filled moments when martyred heroes are portrayed as slipping their earthly bonds to attain heavenly transfiguration, moments Benjamin, as we have seen, regards as still occurring within the allegoric signifying system. Thus Gerhard Kaiser, in an essay on *Leo Armenius* published in 1968, gently upbraids Benjamin for rooting such historical tragedies in a profane history and refuting their eschatological, transfiguring moments. In contradicting this perspective, Kaiser notes that the Baroque regards reality (“Wirklichkeit”) in itself (“an sich selbst gesehen”) as chaotic, but that it becomes meaningful (“sinnvoll”) when one regards it as evidence of a transcendent truth.<sup>16</sup>

We have seen that such truth, anchored in a prophetic ambience and showing an immanent link between earthly sign and otherworldly signified, is rooted in the domain of the symbol. When Benjamin uses terms such as “allegory of resurrection,” he is stretching the boundaries of allegorical signification beyond the limits he himself set in linking the allegorical resolutely to a this-worldly “petrified primordial landscape.”<sup>17</sup>

<sup>15</sup> Arthur Hübscher, “Barock als Gestaltung antithetischen Lebensgefühls: Grundlegung einer Phaseologie der Geistesgeschichte,” *Euphorion* 24 (1922); 517–62 and 759–805; here 557.

<sup>16</sup> Gerhard Kaiser, “Leo Armenius, Oder Fürsten-Mord,” *Die Dramen des Andreas Gryphius: Eine Sammlung von Einzelinterpretationen*, ed. Gerhard Kaiser (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1968), 3–34; here 32–33.

<sup>17</sup> To be sure, resurrection can be understood as capable of allegorical portrayal if we accept a more traditional perspective on this representational tool. For example, Jane Brown offers the

## The Baroque and Modernism, Allegory and Symbol in Contemporary Benjamin Criticism

In his introduction to the essay collection *Walter Benjamin and the Demands of History*, Michael Steinberg writes: “The primacy of allegory is rooted in the absence of God: it is a Spinozan trope, one might say, Jewish, Protestant, and modernist.”<sup>18</sup> Most of the late twentieth and contemporary Benjamin scholars are focused on his Modernism, but this is seen by these scholars and, to a degree, by Benjamin himself, as beginning in the Baroque age. Beatrice Hanssen argues cogently that Benjamin regarded the mourning play as instantiating “the secularization or spatialization of historical time,” an innovation that she sees as, by extension, marking “the instauration of modernity.”<sup>19</sup>

Rainer Nägele also sees a continuum between the *Trauerspiel* book and Benjamin’s modernist interventions, a continuity evident in his consistent privileging of allegory over symbol, which, in Nägele’s reading, allows him to be regarded as an antipode to the famous twentieth-century Marxist intellectual Georg Lukács, who rooted his advocacy of dynamic over static narrative prose in the transfigurative kineticism of the symbol.<sup>20</sup> Such perspectives are highly illuminating with respect to Benjamin’s critical proclivities, but do they accurately reflect the sentiments of a devout, seventeenth-century Protestant such as Gryphius, who, as Blake Lee Spahr has shown, repeatedly “inserts the ‘ich’ (I) of his own bitter experiences into the religious context to the point of claiming Jesus as his personal friend” in his poetry?<sup>21</sup>

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following highly capacious definition: “By allegory I understand, basically, a mode of representation which renders the supernatural visible, by mimesis a mode which imitates the natural, what is already visible.” Resurrection on the German Baroque stage is a paradigmatic instance of allegory if we agree with this explanation of the term. Jane K. Brown, *The Persistence of Allegory: Drama and Neoclassicism from Shakespeare to Wagner* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007), 5. Brown argues that the symbol has “full literal existence” but is “incommensurable” shortly before claiming that Benjamin associates allegory with “illegibility,” indeed with “a complete loss of referentiality” (151).

**18** Michael P. Steinberg, “Introduction: Benjamin and the Critique of Allegorical Reason” *Walter Benjamin and the Demands of History*, ed. Michael P. Steinberg (Ithaca, NY, and London: Cornell University Press, 1996), 1–23; here 10.

**19** Beatrice Hanssen, *Walter Benjamin’s Other History: Of Stones, Animals, Human Beings, and Angels* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, CA, and London: University of California Press, 1998), 54–55.

**20** Nägele, *Theater, Theory, Speculation* (see note 8), 94–107.

**21** Blake Lee Spahr, *Andreas Gryphius: A Modern Perspective*. Studies in German Literature, Linguistics, and Culture (Columbia, SC: Camden House, 1993), 38.



Consistent in these readings of Benjamin is a tendency to conflate the secular perspectives of late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Modernism with Early Modernist seventeenth-century laments at mankind's fallen state, as well as this latter period's despair at God's seemingly insurmountable distance from war-ravaged seventeenth-century Europe, to the point that some contemporary Benjamin scholars regard God as absent for Protestant authors such as Gryphius. In their readings, Baroque fantasy and prophetic projection are seen to be rooted more in dramaturgic technique than in religious conviction.

A rare example of a recent monograph on Benjamin written by a scholar whose specialization lies in Baroque/Early Modern German literature is Jane Newman's 2011 study *Benjamin's Library: Modernity, Nation, and the Baroque*. This book provides useful insights into the supernatural, fantastic elements of Gryphius's plays that I will draw upon in the following, concluding section of this essay, when I will examine this aspect of Gryphius's historical tragedies to highlight how traces of the symbol are evident in his works. On the other hand, many Benjamin scholars regard his instantiation of allegorical reading in his works on Modernity as fundamentally an extension of his exploration of allegorical structures in the Baroque mourning plays in his *Trauerspiel* book, a continuum such readings also apply to his abnegation of the symbol,<sup>22</sup>

Newman situates this book as part of a continuum with contemporary (which is to say, early twentieth-century) efforts to establish a relatively coherent link between Modernism and the Baroque age. For example, Newman argues that Benjamin and the school of which she regards the *Trauerspiel* book as exemplary saw the Baroque as part of a "telic" chain of "antihumanist" literary/artistic movements, such as those found in the Middle Ages, Romanticism, and even Expressionism, that abnegate all forms of Classicism and culminate in the modern, contemporary unified German nation.<sup>23</sup> In Newman's reading of previous scholarship, Benjamin's privileging of the allegory over the symbol in the *Trauerspiel* book is rooted in the then contemporary critical focus on emblematics in this genre. For Benjamin, in this reading, allegory establishes a signifying mode that is entirely arbitrary and through which virtually any object or relation can signify

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<sup>22</sup> See, for example, Nägele, *Theater, Theory, Speculation* (see note 8). In elucidating Benjamin's essay on Marcel Proust, Nägele says of a passage on the physiognomy of the Proustian image ("Bild"): "Benjamin does not read the image as symbol, because this image is not the melting together of physis and meaning in the inseparable unity of a *Gestalt*. It is an allegorical image of the discrepancy between work and life" (107).

<sup>23</sup> Jane O. Newman, *Benjamin's Library: Modernity, Nation, and the Baroque* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2011), 7.

anything else.<sup>24</sup> Despite their often superficially inchoate character, this is not the case with Gryphius's historical tragedies, to which we now turn our attention.

## Symbol, Transcendence, Fantasy, and Prophetic Projection in Gryphius's Historical Tragedies

*Leo Armenius*, like all of Gryphius's historical tragedies, is based on chronicles concerning royal and courtly life, but drew on historical narratives only as a starting point to portray how personal weakness and humanity's corrupt earth-bound condition are transcended in a future anterior. Known facts about a royal or courtly personage's martyrdom are intertwined with fantasy, imaginatively configured dreams, and a prophetic projection based on what is known about these personages' last days to instantiate their symbolic resurrection. Fantasy, imagination, dreams, and prophetic projection in these plays argue against using Benjamin's formula "allegory of resurrection" to characterize those events; Benjamin and his present-day adherents have rooted allegory so firmly in the shattered, broken, fragmented, sinful character of postlapsarian life that heavenly transfiguration in the works of Gryphius and his fellow Baroque dramatists, the glimpse of transcendence, harmony, and resolution in a heavenly beyond, must be seen to bear the unmistakable trace of symbolic figuration. That is to say, Benjamin and his followers have rooted Baroque allegory so unequivocally in the fallen character of earthly life that the very notion of an "allegory of resurrection" must appear, considering their own critical approach, to be an oxymoron.

Leo Armenius (775–820) was an emperor of Byzantium in the ninth century. His rise to power was enabled by tyranny, deceit, military violence, and murder, but the focus of Gryphius's play is the intrigue instigated by a high-ranking army general, Michael Balbus, to replace him. Balbus's machinations are highlighted, but this tragedy clearly shows Balbus's blood-soaked path to the throne parallels that of Leo. However, Leo displays weakness in acceding to the wish of his consort Theodosia not to execute his foe on Christmas Eve, contrary to his counselors' advice to carry out Balbus's death sentence immediately, or at least to put the rebel in prison. This reprieve gives Balbus time to carry out his plot and turn the tables on the emperor.

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24 Newman, *Benjamin's Library* (see note 23), 180–81.

Several episodes in the play foreshadow how Leo's act of weakness in giving into his wife's wish for a reprieve for his enemy will lead to his doom. The chorus of landed aristocrats ("Reyen der Hoffe-Junckern") in *Leo Armenius* debates whether dreaming and ghosts foreshadow an actual future, and a concluding supplement ("Zusatz") to the debate establishes that the heavens issue warnings through signs ("Zeichen") even though those forewarned cannot escape their portended fate.<sup>25</sup> Leo himself receives such portents in imaginative dream sequences, but because his downfall is realized in historical fact, a symbolic link between fantastic dream and its future realization is inevitably suggested.

*Leo Armenius* opens with Michael Balbus's own reflections on the intersection between prophecy and history. One can read the course of the suns and the speed of the stars, interpret vegetation by examining leaves in the thousands. The Greeks have their own art, and what is thought is put down on paper. One can even determine how and when one will die (19). Here Gryphius signals the validity of prophetic insight and projection when it is to be found in written form. Indeed, it is set down in the chronicles Gryphius consulted in composing this historical tragedy, though it is a bit ironic that Balbus does not recognize history will establish his own reputation as a tyrant. The spirit ("Geist") of Tarasii and the ghost ("Gespenst") of Michaelis try to warn Leo in a visitation that he must awaken, that his scepter is being broken, but to no avail (64–65). However, the chorus of landed aristocrats seems to call the veracity of such ghostly visitations into question, wondering if it is true that a ghost, dream, or sign reveal what one can expect, or whether such ethereal perceptions are simply the product of fantasy that troubles a tired spirit (77).

In the *Trauerspiel* book, Benjamin recognizes that prophetic dreams as well as ghostly visitations signal the tyrant's doom, as in Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. He indicates that Gryphius was especially convinced of the value of everything connected to the spirit world (I.1, 312–13/*OGT*, 134–35). Indeed, as Newman suggests, the motif of ghosts and the conjuration of the witching hour in *Hamlet* were a major reason Benjamin considered Shakespeare's drama a fundamentally German play.<sup>26</sup>

Newman sees Benjamin's absorption of Shakespeare into the pantheon of German Baroque playwrights such as Gryphius and Daniel Casper von Lohenstein (1635–1683) as consistent with the efforts of his contemporaries engaged in scholarship on Early Modern German literature to establish a continuum with this

<sup>25</sup> Andreas Gryphius, "Leo Armenius," *Dramen*, ed. Eberhard Mannack (Frankfurt a. M.: Deutscher Klassiker Verlag, 1991), 9–116; here 77–78. Citations of Gryphius's dramas are taken from this edition and hereafter cited in the body of the text.

<sup>26</sup> Newman, *Benjamin's Library* (see note 23), 143–44.

period and subsequent movements leading up to, and helping to constitute, contemporary Protestant Modernism in the Wilhelminian and Weimar eras. Benjamin's enthusiasm for Gryphius's and Shakespeare's ghosts is rooted in the view that the Elizabethan bard and the German Baroque dramatists constitute an almost seamless totality that can be discerned to develop in a virtually teleological manner toward post-unification modernity in the Second Empire, and the ghosts created by Shakespeare and Gryphius are harnessed into the scholar's effort to establish this continuum. Thus, according to Newman, Benjamin believed *Hamlet*, as is the case with German Baroque dramas, "is indebted to the world of spirits and thus signals the power of a providential kind of 'fate' to rule this world. By means of such textual gymnastics, Shakespeare's hero takes on a confessionally German role."<sup>27</sup>

What must be added, however, is that, contrary to Benjamin's views, providentiality suggests a symbolic mode of signification, linking the seemingly duplicitous, fallen, shattered, postlapsarian worldly realm to an imaginatively, indeed fantastically conjured ghostly spirit world reflecting a divine order, a holistic pre-established harmonious link between heaven and earth, God and man. As with his other historical tragedies, this link is revealed in the climactic martyrdom of Leo Armenius, when he grasps the genuine Cross of God to defend himself against his attackers, a vain effort which nevertheless establishes his transfiguring martyrdom (99). As Spahr notes, in this episode "reality and the symbol" commingle. Leo's actual, sin-stained blood is fused with "the stained, symbolic blood of Christ." Christ's shed blood atones "symbolically for man's real sins. And the symbol becomes real, whereas the real blood, which Leo will shed becomes a symbol, which will fall upon the symbolic blood made real."<sup>28</sup> Through ghostly prophecy, the future anterior voice established by the mix of fantasy and the historical fact of Leo's murder, as well as the imbrication of the divine and the profane as his martyrdom is dramatically portrayed, Gryphius transfigures his eponymous protagonist through the sort of symbolic signifying process Benjamin denied was a factor in the Baroque *Trauerspiel*.

A similar martyrdom-induced transfiguration takes place under very different historical and dramaturgic conditions in *Catharina von Georgien*. This play is based on a French chronicle and a few other sources concerning a Georgian queen who was held prisoner for several years in Persia before the Persian Shah had her executed in 1624. The full title of the play is *Catharina von Georgien. Oder bewehrte Beständigkeit* (Catharina of Georgia. Or Embattled

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<sup>27</sup> Newman, *Benjamin's Library* (see note 23), 144.

<sup>28</sup> Spahr, *Andreas Gryphius* (see note 21), 77.

Constancy), and the constancy the queen displays, proving her valor but leading to her martyrdom, is twofold; she resists the efforts of the Shah, who is inflamed by passion for her, to make her his paramour and consort, and she rejects his attempt to force her to convert to Islam.

There are three primary episodes in this drama. First, the Shah makes intemperate efforts to constrain the queen to accede to his wishes. A Russian delegation then attempts to obtain her release. Finally, there are drawn-out descriptions of the queen's martyrdom after the Shah breaks his word to the Russians that he will release her, and she persists in her adherence to her faith and her virtuous constancy to her late husband. Gryphius enhanced his audience's identification with the eponymous heroine by erasing the Persian Shia Safavid monarchy's long-standing conflicts with the Sunni Ottoman Empire and making it appear that Catharina's tormentors are not distinct from the Turks who invaded Christian Europe on several occasions in the Early Modern period and were thus a particularly strong object of hatred among Christians in the German lands and elsewhere on the continent.<sup>29</sup>

Doing so allowed Gryphius to efface any complicating factors in contrasting absolute Christian good and absolute Muslim evil, and this makes it easier for him to create the confessionally harmonious tableaux conducive to symbolic figuration. The historical Catharina's adherence to the Eastern Christian faith rather than to Gryphius's Western Protestantism is also papered over in the drama's portrayal of the two antipodes of Christianity and Islam.

The smoothing out of intra-confessional discord in both Islam and Christianity in *Catharina von Georgien* bears further examination. Dominik Finkelde has argued in an essay on the *Trauerspiel* book that Benjamin's study elucidates how in the Baroque age "the allegory has 'lost' the force of the symbol to articulate stable signification" and lays bare "the loss of transcendence that is responsible for a basic mood of Baroque melancholy."<sup>30</sup>

I would suggest that, on the contrary, positing Islam and Christianity as unambiguously antithetical opposites untroubled by internal ambiguities is precisely what enables the symbol in *Catharina* to establish signifying stability. As Hans-Jürgen Schings has opined, the archetypally virtuous Christian Catharina emerges as the classically beatified, imaginatively transfigured martyr whose

<sup>29</sup> On Gryphius's deliberate conflation of Islam's two primary confessional strands in this martyr drama, see Bethany Wiggan, "Staging Shi'ites in Silesia: Andreas Gryphius's *Catharina von Georgien*," *German Quarterly* 83.1 (2010): 1–18.

<sup>30</sup> Dominik Finkelde, "The Presence of the Baroque: Benjamin's *Ursprung des deutschen Trauerspiels* in Contemporary Contexts," *A Companion to the Works of Walter Benjamin*, ed. Rolf J. Goebel (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2009), 46–69; here 53.

quiet resolution envelops her in an ambience of “tranquillitas” while the Shah’s unquenched passion and ultimate regret (“Reue”) envelop him in the fantastically vivid hellish flames of “perturbatio.” The representation of these emotional states as antithetical modes of spiritual being, respectively signifying innocent purity and guilt-laden sinfulness, were fundamental motifs in the ascetic/mystical literature of the Middle Ages,<sup>31</sup> and Gryphius can draw upon his audience’s likely familiarity with these antipodes to create a stable mode of signification rooted in religious symbology. Fantasy and imaginative figuration underscore Gryphius’s providential interpretation of history, served by his creation of a dialectical opposition between Catharina and the Shah. This is evident in their respective dreams, visions, and prophetic projections. Catharina relates early in the play to her chambermaid Salome a dream she had the night before:

[...] Vns kamen die Paläste  
Die wir besessen vor. Gurgistans trotzte Feste  
War mit gewürktem Gold auff herrlichst’ außgezirt /  
Wir würden auff den Thron (wie wol vorhin!) geführt. (136)

[The palaces that we had possessed  
Appeared to us. Gurjistan’s defiant fortress  
Was most magnificently decorated with wrought gold  
We were led (as certainly in previous times!) to the throne.]

This cannot be a prophecy projected into her earthly future, because the historical Catharina was never freed from her Persian captivity, was killed while a prisoner of the Shah, and the informed reader or spectator would have known this fate awaited the stage Catharina. As Baroque theatrical dreams are prophetic, Catharina’s vision of the now gilded palace of her native land can only be a symbol of heaven misinterpreted by a still living, mortal woman nurtured by a still lively hope of freedom and restoration to power in her native land. Her prophetic vision of the Shah’s damnation at the play’s conclusion, with its vivid image of his withered laurel crown, is to be regarded as accurate, although she is already deceased and is but an apparition, a product of the Shah’s “eitel Phantasy” (“vain fantasy”). Shortly thereafter, the play closes with the Shah indicating that Catharina’s real revenge on him is the continued, never to be consummated passion he feels for her even after her martyrdom (222). His “perturbatio” will never end, making his further life as a mortal into a hell on earth.

As Eberhard Mannack has noted, Catharina, in her resolute Christian faith, her striving for God, country, and family, her ability to transcend the world’s

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31 Hans-Jürgen Schings, “Catharina von Georgien. Oder Bewehrete Beständigkeit,” *Die Dramen des Andreas Gryphius* (see note 16), 35–72; here 56.

fallen condition, her constancy, and her tranquil acceptance of her suffering a slow, gruesome death, is a perfect martyr. Her striving leads to a triumphant overcoming of life's travails and frailties. She is the victor ("Siegerin") in her conflict with the Shah.<sup>32</sup> His power and triumph are shown to be an illusion; the play projects Catharina's divine victory in the eyes of heaven and the Shah's ultimate consignment to Hell's flames through his evil deeds seemingly permitted by his false religion. His suffering the heat of passion even after Catharina's death signals his future perdition. The stable, unambiguous relational dynamics that are established between Catharina and the Shah: chaste, virtuous woman<sup>33</sup> vs. sinful, corrupted man/helpless but steadfast queen vs. superficially omnipotent, emotionally unstable, inconstant tyrant/good Christian vs. evil Muslim, establish, contrary to the view of Finkelde, a stable signifying system vested in a belief in divine transcendence, enabling "the force of the symbol" as this martyr drama's dominant semiotic property. Catharina's triumph at the end of the drama creates an ambience that is anything but melancholic.

Charles Stewart (1600–1649) is undoubtedly the most well-known personage among the figures who populate Gryphius's historical tragedies. The regicide of the English King by the forces of Oliver Cromwell is a seminal event in the history of Great Britain and has been both the subject of scholarly investigations and creative explorations for hundreds of years, but Gryphius was a contemporary of Charles I, and the Royalist Saxon Protestant playwright was deeply troubled by the King's overthrow and execution. The first version is in large measure a purely monologic and dialogic recitation of a very recently transpired chain of incidents, while the second, much longer version has more dramatic action. Common to

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<sup>32</sup> Eberhard Mannack, *Andreas Gryphius*, 2nd ed. Abteilung D, Literaturgeschichte, 76 (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1986), 62.

<sup>33</sup> To be sure, Catharina is portrayed as subject to the pursuit of the transitory pleasures and ambitions of earthly life prior to her transfiguring martyrdom. However, Gryphius employs a stable, well-known symbol to signify the transience of earthly delights: the rose. As Irene Morris notes, roses cause Catharina to reflect on the brief duration of earthly enjoyment and achievement: "in their short-lived splendour they become for Catharina a symbol of her own life: they represent a general law of life, its brevity, the fleeting nature of fame and fortune, the suffering that is inseparable from life suggested by the thorns, and the blood of martyrdom, which is red like the colour of the rose. Her interpretation stems from the mediaeval theological belief that the world is a system of images pointing to God and to man's place and role in a divinely created world; everything is a symbol of the invisible." Morris believes Gryphius's symbol of the rose inspired Lessing's use of this motif in his most famous bourgeois tragedy. Irene Morris, "The Symbol of the Rose: A Baroque Echo in *Emilia Galotti*," *Publications of the English Goethe Society* 64.1 (1993): 53–71; here 55.

both versions is the frequent instantiation of royal ghosts calling for revenge, prophetic dreams and visions, imaginatively constellated representations of historical events. Not long after the publication of the first version, Cromwell died (1658) and the English monarchy was restored (1660). Thus, while both versions are laced with historical projections couched in fantastic imagery, the future tense employed in much of *Carolus Stuardus A* is retrospectively transformed into the future anterior in *Carolus Stuardus B*. For example, a personified revenge appears at the end of the first version, who envisions the breaking of thunder-filled clouds, spreading vibrant lightning, issuing threats of vengeance, drawing a sword against the executioners and proclaiming woe to a trembling Albion.<sup>34</sup> While the second version is identical (548–49), it would inevitably have taken on a retrospective cast for viewers and readers of Gryphius's historical tragedy. The turmoil prophesized in the first version has been fulfilled by the time the second version stages, once again, an imaginatively constellated projection into a future that is now, for Gryphius and his audience, in the past.

The distinction between future and future anterior is relevant for the issue of allegorical and symbolic signification in the play. Albrecht Schöne has noted Benjamin's problematic elucidation of allegory in *Carolus Stuardus*. The full title of this historical tragedy is: *Ermordete Majestät. Oder Carolus Stuardus, König von Gross Britanien* (Murdered Majesty. Or Charles Stewart, King of Great Britain). Citing Benjamin's comment that in such double titles one portion refers to the fact itself ("auf die Sache"), while the other points toward the allegorical, Schöne claims that while the significance of the allegorical form for the Baroque age is beyond question, the tragedy's structural principle is vested in the emblematic, rooted in the factual ("Faktizität") of what is represented. This emblematic principle is evident in the play's figural structuring. Thus, the suffering Charles Stewart enters the stage as an emblem ("Sinnbild") of the "Imitatio Christi."<sup>35</sup> I would argue that this emblematic character verges into the symbolic realm somewhat in the second version, as emblematic sign and referent are harmoniously fused in a tableau that can be characterized, in 1663, as the

34 Gryphius, "Carolus Stuardus A," *Gesamtausgabe der deutschsprachigen Werke*, vol. 4, ed. Hugh Powell (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer, 1964), 1–52; here 52. The Deutscher Klassiker Verlag volume cited for Gryphius's other historical tragedies, and for the second version of *Carolus Stuardus*, does not contain the first version.

35 Albrecht Schöne, "Ermordete Majestät. Oder Carolus Stuardus König von Groß Britannien," *Die Dramen des Andreas Gryphius* (see note 16), 117–69; here 166. A contrasting view is presented by Newman, *Benjamin's Library* (see note 23), who argues that Benjamin actually engaged in a strongly "emblematic reading of the Lutheran Baroque" (181).



representation of fulfilled history even if the fantastic, metaphysical, imaginative elements of Gryphius's figurations are retained in *Carolus Stuardus B*.

As Marian Szyrocki has noted, Cromwell's death in 1658 and the ascension of Charles II to the English throne in 1660 inspired figural and structural changes to *Carolus Stuardus* reflected in the second version, based on Gryphius's wish to be faithful to the facts of history. However, based on Szyrocki's summary of the two versions, *Carolus Stuardus B* emerges as more fantastic, spectrally haunting, and unearthly than the first version. In the first scene of *Carolus Stuardus A*, the spirits of Irish Viceregent Stafford and Archbishop of Canterbury Laud lament Albion's wish to spill royal blood, and the chorus after the four acts serves an exclusively political function, refuting point-by-point any attempt to justify regicide. In the fifth act of the second version, an unearthly ("schauerliche") vision is added, in which Poleh (one of the King's judges) prophesizes the gruesome demise of Cromwell and Charles I's murderers, as well as the crowning of Charles II.<sup>36</sup> Before Charles Stewart's execution, Poleh is haunted by a fantasy of God restoring the prince to the throne as well as his own demise, painted in apocalyptic hues, when the Thames river will burn in sulfuric blue, the sun will tremble, and the day will blacken (538).

With recent history having witnessed the death of Cromwell and the resumption of royal rule in England by Charles II, Gryphius once again enacts an imaginatively drawn projection of what will transpire, where past events can be seen in a fully realized continuum marked by the symbolic valence of the future anterior, sign, and referent become identical in the representation of historical events that have, by the time *Carolus Stuardus B* was composed, already taken place. Once again, Gryphius's providential interpretation of history is brought to vivid life through the liberal application of fantasy and imagination.

*Papinianus* is the only historical tragedy by Gryphius to feature a primary, eponymous protagonist who is not a royal personage, a king, queen, or emperor. Aemilius Paulus Papinianus ([142–212 CE], widely known as Papinian, as he is in the play) was a legal advisor to Roman Emperor Severus (145–211 CE) from 205–211 CE. He was a well-known jurist and friend to the emperor and advised him on fine points of Roman law. This emperor died without establishing which of his two sons, Caracalla or Geta, would succeed him. After Caracalla had his brother murdered, he ordered Papinian to whitewash this murder as an act of legally sanctioned self-defense. Papinian's refusal to do so led Caracalla

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36 Marian Szyrocki, *Andreas Gryphius: Sein Leben und Werk* (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer, 1964), 89–90.

to instigate legal proceedings against the legal advisor for treason, and consequently Papinian was executed in the year 212.

The play opens with Papinian bemoaning the turmoil caused by the death of Severus without a clear line of succession (318–19). A somewhat minor matter leads Bassian (which is to say, Antoninus Bassianus Caracalla; Bassian is the emperor's name in the play) to commit the fratricide, and only Papinian's legal justification of this deed can allow Bassian to avoid major repercussions. Papinian resolutely denies the emperor this legitimation, even though he knows the refusal to carry out Bassian's command will strip him of his ability to act as a force for good in the empire. Though a pagan, Papinian's sympathetic treatment of adherents to the nascent Christian faith enhances the impact of his heroic refusal to accede to tyranny and the audience's identification with him as a martyr. It also ameliorates the peculiar passivity that informs his persona throughout much of the play.

This passivity stems from the dilemma he faces as a relatively powerless figure trying to choose a course of action both morally just and advantageous to the empire, but, as Werner Eggers notes, only his choice of death over duplicity is an act based on a completely free decision ("ein auf freier Entscheidung beruhender Akt").<sup>37</sup> Because Papinian is a relatively impotent individual cast in a largely passive rather than active role, and devoid of the royal aura exuded by Gryphius's title characters in his other historical tragedies, the somewhat infrequently instantiated nexus of fantasy, imagination, dream, and prophetic projection in *Papinianus* is almost exclusively connected to the figure of Bassian. It is his visions that are informed by traces of the symbol.

Bassian suffers through a prophetic vision as he is sleeping. In his dream, the Furies and the Fates, along with his father, the late Emperor Severus, appear to him. Megaera calls the wrath of God upon the guilty son's head in a brief monologue redolent with the tone of divine Old Testament damnation:

So schlage Gottes Zorn auff sein verdammtes Haupt  
 Es werd' Jhm Stand und Ehr und Gut und Leib geraubt  
 Es falle sein Geschlecht  
 Und lebe doch zu ewig stetem Hohn  
 Und schaue wie das Recht  
 Verkehr in nichts den ungerechten Thron. (400)

[May God's fury strike his damned head  
 Let him be robbed of standing and honor and property and body

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37 Werner Eggers, *Wirklichkeit und Wahrheit im Trauerspiel von Andreas Gryphius*. Probleme der Dichtung, 9 (Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag C. Winter, 1967), 81.

May his dynasty fall  
 And yet live in eternally constant scorn  
 And witness how justice  
 Transforms into nothing the unjust throne.]

This conjuration of doom is enhanced by the appearance of the late Emperor Severus, who disowns his murderous son (401). As is consistent with Gryphius, such ill omens and auguries imbued with gruesome imagery project into a future where they will be fulfilled. Emperor Caracalla was in fact stabbed to death by a soldier, Justin Martialis, because the emperor had refused to make him a centurion. Immediately upon hearing that Papinian's execution had been carried out, Bassian has another vision of his violent demise, perceiving the sighing and whimpering of his first victim, his brother Geta. He requests from both his brother and his father the identity of who is jumping about him with torches, who is swinging a blood-drenched sword (415). Thus, consistent with his other historical tragedies, Gryphius combines his knowledge of notable past events with fantastic spectral imagery to enact the future anterior, couching real-life incidents known to an educated posterity in the guise of vivid, richly imaginative tableaux.

This fusion of poetic sign and historical referent, the projection into a future which will be fulfilled in a manner analogous to what is dramatically portrayed as a visionary prophecy through the prodigious employment of fantasy and imagination is what imbues *Papinianus*, in a manner like that of Gryphius's other historical tragedies. The use of fantastic, imaginative imagery enhances the impact of Gryphius's portrayal of fulfilled history in all these tragedies.

## Conclusion

Gryphius was not unique among German Baroque playwrights in employing on-stage prophecy to project fulfilled history in his dramas. Of Lohenstein's *Agrippina* (1665), Judith Aikin notes "prophecies announce several punitive events which the audience knows later occurred: the great fire and fall of the first imperial dynasty."<sup>38</sup> Indeed, Aikin has devoted an entire monograph to what its subtitle refers to as *Historical Tragedy as Prophecy and Polemic* in Lohenstein's plays.<sup>39</sup> However, Gryphius's historical tragedies were both

<sup>38</sup> Judith Popovich Aikin, *German Baroque Drama*. Series (Boston: Twayne, 1982), 72.

<sup>39</sup> Aikin, *The Mission of Rome in the Dramas of Daniel Casper von Lohenstein: Historical Tragedy as Prophecy and Polemic*. Stuttgarter Arbeiten zur Germanistik, 21 (Stuttgart: Heinz, 1976).

groundbreaking with respect to prophetic voice, exerting a seminal influence on younger dramatists such as Lohenstein,<sup>40</sup> as well as highly original and adroit in using fantasy, imagination, and dreams to instantiate his prophetic projections on stage. Lohenstein was an early German adherent of French Neoclassicism, with its emphasis on verisimilitude. This circumstance and the lack of a divine transcendent element in his works make his fantastic, imaginative, even ghostly sequences less vibrant and vivid than those of Gryphius,<sup>41</sup> and, given the unbridgeable divide between heaven and earth in Lohenstein's dramas,<sup>42</sup> they are also less imbued with symbols than those of his older colleague.

In view of his own discussions of the symbol, Benjamin largely overlooks symbolic moments in the work of Gryphius. In elucidating Benjamin's famous discussion of allegory as confronting the reader or audience member with the Hippocratic face of history as fundamentally a frozen landscape, discussed earlier in the present essay, Richard Wolin asserts: "Whereas for the symbol the ideal of time is found in the fulfilled mystical instant (*Nu*), for allegory it is

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40 Aikin, *German Baroque Drama* (see note 38), 64–66.

41 On the lack of divine transcendence in Lohenstein's plays, and how his subtle agnosticism differentiates his perspective from that of Gryphius, see Wilhelm Vosskamp, *Untersuchungen zur Zeit- und Geschichtsauffassung im 17. Jahrhundert bei Gryphius und Lohenstein* (Bonn: Bouvier, 1967), 162–63. A similar view on Lohenstein's presentation of humanity as lacking recourse to supernatural succor and salvation is articulated by Hugo Bekker, "The Dramatic World of Daniel Casper von Lohenstein," *German Life and Letters* 19.3 (1966): 161–66. Lohenstein's most famous play, *Sophonisbe* (1680) provides an excellent example of the playwright's status between the rather antithetical poles of German Baroque and French Neoclassical thought. There are ghostly visions and grand prophecies in this tragedy, but the eponymous heroine, the Queen of Carthage, is abandoned by the gods. Daniel Casper von Lohenstein, "Sophonisbe," *Das schlesische Kunstdrama* (see note 14), 224–321. Consistent with the play's composition at the dawn of the Enlightenment, there are constant appeals in this historical tragedy to reason (both "Vernunft" and "Verstand"). However, as a Lohenstein scholar has observed with respect to *Sophonisbe*, while "Roman reason condemns the barbaric in Carthaginian civilization" a minor character expresses "the feeling that reason is incapable of illuminating the mystery of fate; it sits on the judgement seat, inscrutable and depersonalized." Gerald Ernest Paul Gillespie, *Daniel Casper von Lohenstein's Historical Tragedies* (Columbus, OH: Ohio State University Press, 1965), 118.

42 One critic has plausibly asserted that the motif of transcendent heavenly eternity is lacking in Lohenstein's dramas and that only earthly temporality is apparent as a structuring principle in his theatrical works. In this view, such an approach to historical tragedy is antithetical to that of Gryphius, whose dramaturgy consistently reflects the time-eternity dualism. Ulrich Fülleborn, *Die barocke Grundspannung Zeit – Ewigkeit in den Trauerspielen Lohensteins: Zur Frage der strukturellen Einheit des deutschen Barockdramas*. Dichtung und Erkenntnis, 8 (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1969), 6.

represented by the idea of an unfulfilled infinite progression.”<sup>43</sup> In those moments of Gryphius's historical tragedies in which the projection into a future has already been fulfilled through seminal historical events known to an educated audience, past prophecy and future reality become one, the conjuration of the “fulfilled mystical instant” takes place, heavenly ascendance is suggested, and allegory's “unfulfilled infinite progression” is briefly transcended. Such moments suggest fulfilled history. They employ the future anterior voice in combination with imaginative, indeed fantastic tableaux and constitute the traces of the symbol in the plays of Gryphius.

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<sup>43</sup> Richard Wolin, *Walter Benjamin: An Aesthetic of Redemption* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), 66.



Emmy Herland

# The Shadow of the Knight: Phantom Fears and their Distortions of Reality in Baroque Spanish Theater

The dead have no existence other than that which the living imagine for them –

Jean Claude Schmitt

Alone on the road late at night, Alonso, the protagonist of Lope de Vega's play *El caballero de Olmedo* (The Knight from Olmedo),<sup>1</sup> encounters a frightening figure with an uncertain identity and purpose. The figure is a *sombra* – a shadow – and not even certainly human, who introduces himself as “Don Alonso,” the protagonist's own ghost. Alonso's state of mind at the time of the ghost's appearance suggests that it is perhaps only a figment of his imagination, indicating that his perception is not a reliable reflection of reality. However, it is also possible that the ghost is a brief glimpse of the future, an omen of death that suggests that Alonso is, in effect, already dead. This understanding indicates that Alonso's demise is predestined and that a certain structure and order underpins all human lives.

These two interpretations of the ghost are at odds with each other as the latter cannot represent a concept of true reality beyond the scope of human understanding if it is only a figment of Alonso's imagination. One allows for a reality that is both controlled and predetermined while the other presents reality as malleable and individually-constructed. This apparent contradiction indicates both a desire to believe in an ordered world and an underlying fear that maybe true meaning and objective reality do not exist. If we believe that the ghost is objectively real – that is, that it exists outside only of Alonso's perception – then we can maintain our belief in the structured world. If we believe that the ghost is Alonso's imagination or fear causing him to see what is not

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<sup>1</sup> The date of composition of this play is unknown. One study situates it between 1620 and 1625 (Sylvanus Griswold Morley and Courtney Bruerton, *The Chronology of Lope de Vega's Comedias: With a Discussion of Doubtful Attribution, the Whole Based on a Study of His Strophic Versification*. Monograph series, 11 [New York, London: Modern Language Association, 1940]). A later study compiles a variety different sources for the date of this play and concludes that it was likely written in either 1621 or 1623 (Ignacio Arellano, “Estructura dramática y responsabilidad: De nuevo sobre la interpretación de El caballero de Olmedo de Lope de Vega. [Notas para una síntesis],” *En torno al estudio del siglo de oro*, ed. Irene Pardo Molina and Antonio Serrano [Almería: Instituto de Estudios Almerienses, 2001], 95–113).

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Emmy Herland, University of Washington, Seattle, USA

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there, then we accept that each person perceives the world differently, that what we believe to be real may not be, and that, in fact, a singular truth does not exist.

Jacques Derrida explored these contradictions inherent in the phenomenon in his 1993 text *Specters of Marx*.<sup>2</sup> This work has been profoundly influential in the growing field of spectral studies, a field whose development Derrida's text catalyzed; nearly every piece of spectral theory or ghostly criticism has been founded on the concept of *hauntology* developed by Derrida in his original work. *Hauntology*, a portmanteau of "haunt" and "ontology," is employed to describe the paradoxical state of the ghost, whose existence creates contradictions of time and presence. The ghost must exist outside of humanity's linear construction of time, since it is a figure from the past that exists in the present and, furthermore, has a great impact on the future. A ghost must also be understood to be both present and absent simultaneously; a ghost is a presence that occupies a space of absence. This particular paradox has been beautifully described by Avery Gordon, who says:

If haunting describes how that which appears to be not there is often a seething presence, acting on and often meddling with taken-for-granted realities, the ghost is just the sign, or the empirical evidence if you like, that tells you a haunting is taking place ... The ghost or the apparition is one form by which something lost, or barely visible, or seemingly not there to our supposedly well-trained eyes, makes itself known or apparent to us, in its own way, of course.<sup>3</sup>

The ghost is evidence, then, of absence; it is a paradoxically extant demonstration of non-existence. As the ghost breaks down these binary states of being – presence and absence, past and present, real and not real – which are fundamental to the human experience, it challenges the purpose of such classifications and the depth of humanity's understanding of the world.

Ghosts are an especially interesting site of cultural exploration due to their near universality. Jean-Claude Schmitt notes that "imagining death and the future of the dead in the hereafter has formed an essential part of the religious beliefs of all societies."<sup>4</sup> Schmitt argues that the beliefs of each society reflect the structures of the society itself, and therefore that the myth surrounding the dead beyond life and life beyond death reflect that culture's attitudes toward

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<sup>2</sup> Jacques Derrida, *Specters of Marx*, trans. Peggy Kamuf (1993; New York: Routledge, 1994).

<sup>3</sup> Avery Gordon, *Ghostly Matters: Haunting and the Sociological Imagination* (Minneapolis, MN, and London: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 8.

<sup>4</sup> Jean-Claude Schmitt, *Ghosts in the Middle Ages: The Living and the Dead in Medieval Society*, trans. Teresa Lavender Fagan (1994; Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1998), 1.



life and death themselves. Regarding the belief in ghosts in the Middle Ages, prior to the period that I will examine in this article, Schmitt carefully examines the significant role which high medieval Christianity played. Although there are scenes in the Bible itself that depict reanimation and life after death, the Church did not necessarily approve of or endorse belief in ghosts. Saint Augustine, for example, clearly rejected the possible existence of ghosts, explaining that that the apparition of a “ghost” is merely a spiritual image that maintains no connection to any dead person. A spiritual image, that is, an image perceived in the spiritual vision, is akin to an imagined picture. Augustine denies that a spiritual image may connect to the dead, using the example of a dream in which a friend’s image appears; just as, he argues, that friend has no idea that he is being dreamed of, the dead would have no idea that they are being seen on earth.<sup>5</sup> The ghost, therefore, is a product of the human mind.

This theory, however, is contradicted throughout the remainder of the Middle Ages, especially from the eleventh to fifteenth centuries, when autobiographical ghost stories begin to be popular. A logic of ghosts begins to emerge: ghosts return principally from purgatory, rather than Heaven or Hell, because the souls in purgatory are those that can best benefit from an interaction with the living; those dead souls may benefit from masses, prayers, or alms, all of which the living can provide them; souls are also shown to possess superhuman sight, since they can see everything that happens on earth as well as foresee the future and provide warnings or prophecies for the living.

This is a belief that continues into the Early Modern period and survives in Spain, despite the presence of the Holy Office of the Inquisition, which attempted to crack down on practitioners of witchcraft, magic, and other occult arts. Juan Blázquez Miguel, examining Inquisition records regarding witchcraft and superstition, explains the lack of records condemning believers in superstition by positing that the Inquisition could not condemn mere believers, as that would have meant the persecution of poor peasants whose only crime was ignorance. This is, of course, assuming that believers in superstition did not take on the role of “teacher of doctrine and behavior,” as Italian miller Menocchio did in the sixteenth century, leading to a series of Inquisitorial trials and, ultimately, his death.<sup>6</sup> And so, despite the Holy Office’s repeated sentencing of witches or dismissal as false of other magics, superstition and belief in the

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<sup>5</sup> Schmitt, *Ghosts in the Middle Ages* (see note 4), 21.

<sup>6</sup> Carlo Ginzburg, *The Cheese and the Worms: The Cosmos of a 16th Century Miller*, trans. John and Anne Tedeschi, (1980; Baltimore, MD, and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976), 5.

supernatural, such as the apparition of ghosts, remained rampant.<sup>7</sup> Aline Hornaday, meanwhile, argues that the Church did not just ignore the superstitious belief in ghosts but in fact went so far as to support it tacitly. She states that, “The value of revenant stories for medieval clergymen lay in their use for creating self-understanding, clarifying and demonstrating the prescribed rules of moral behavior, and acting as tools for their hearers and readers to employ in constructing a viable self delimited from the revenant other.”<sup>8</sup> Whether the Church ignored or supported belief in ghosts, it is clear that superstition was incredibly popular in the Early Modern period.

In Golden Age Spain, the issue of reality also comes to occupy the popular imagination. Playwrights, as well as other authors and artists, of the time are deeply preoccupied with *engaño* and *desengaño*, or deception and disillusion. The world of Baroque Spain is portrayed as in a perpetual state of flux, forcing humanity into constant transit. José Antonio Maravall credits this sense of the continually changing world with producing what he calls the *topos* of the world upside-down.<sup>9</sup> Maravall, according to whom the cultural production of the Baroque period reflects the era’s society, argues that this trope reveals the presence of feelings of instability and uncertainty. He also suggests that implicit in any notion of an upside-down world is the existence of a right-side-up, or a logic and order of things. Left unresolved, however, is what this right-side-up might look like or how it might be defined. In fact, since in addition to an era of changes the Baroque is also an epoch of contrasts, in which different texts demonstrate contradictory experiences of the world, the intention of determining a concrete reality or an indisputable truth is rather dubious. These are the same questions raised by the apparition of ghosts.

The shadow encountered by Alonso can be understood in two different ways: either as internal or external to Alonso’s imagination. The vision might appear as a figure sent to Alonso supernaturally by some external force, perhaps by the Celestinesque Fabia, a witch-cum-matchmaker with somewhat dubious supernatural ability.<sup>10</sup> Alonso wonders if Fabia sent the ghost – and the

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7 Juan Blázquez Miguel, *Eros y Tánatos: brujería, hechicería y superstición en España*. Serie Striga, 1 (Madrid: Editorial Arcano, 1989.)

8 Aline Hornaday, “Visitors from Another Space: The Medieval Revenant as Foreigner,” *Meeting the Foreign in the Middle Ages*, ed. Albrecht Classen (London and New York: Routledge, 2002), 71–95; here 89

9 José Antonio Maravall, *La cultura del barroco*. Letras e Ideas, 7 (Barcelona: Editorial Ariel, 1990).

10 Comparisons between Fernando de Rojas’s *Tragicomedia de Calisto y Melibea* and *El caballero de Olmedo* are abundant; see, in particular Marcel Bataillon, “La Celestina según

singing *labrador* who appears shortly after – in order to dissuade him from making the trip home. He believes that Fabia might be operating at his beloved Inés's urging, since the latter has already indicated that she does not want to be parted from Alonso. If this is the case, the ghost is a supernatural figure summoned by the witch. The summoning of ghosts by magicians and witches is a common occurrence in Golden Age theater (see, for example, Cervantes's *El cerco de la Numancia* [The Siege of Numantia], or Juan de la Cueva's *La constancia de Arcelina* [The Constancy of Arcelina]), and without fail when the ghost is called upon it is for the purpose of divination. By virtue of existing beyond the sphere of human life, the dead are imagined to have access to knowledge of all of space and time simultaneously. When humans are desperately curious about their futures, they call upon the ghosts to bridge the space between life and afterlife and bring their undead omniscience into the living world.<sup>11</sup> Here, unlike in the other plays with scenes of summoning that I have cited above, the one who summons the ghost is not the receiver of its advice or warning, and so Alonso is unaware of the potential role of the ghost. The ghost also fails to provide explicit prophecy, as is typically done, opening up a space of ambiguity that the shadowy figure occupies.

Alonso also considers that the ghost could be a warning from heaven; instead of being sent to him by another person, it could be an omen and an indication that future events are somehow prognosticated but also at least potentially avoidable. This interpretation of the ghost as appearing unsummoned is not unprecedented; other such ghosts appear in Tirso de Molina's *El burlador de Sevilla* (The Trickster of Seville), Calderón de la Barca's *El príncipe constante* (The Constant Prince), and in the collaboration between Luis de Belmonte Bermúdez, Francisco de Rojas Zorilla, and Calderón, *El mejor amigo el muerto* (The Best Friend, the Dead Man). Elsewhere during this period, Shakespeare's *Hamlet* presents a similar ghost figure. Also of note is John Pizer's study in this volume, which examines a similar phenomenon in the prophetic dream sequences in the dramatic works of the German Baroque poet Andreas Gryphius, including one ghostly dream-vision the veracity of which is called into question. The appearance of an unsummoned ghost eliminates the element of human agency in the appearance of the undead. Instead, these ghosts represent an uncontrollable supernatural, and not only that, but also a supernatural that is able to exercise great control of or influence on the human world without the knowledge or

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Fernando de Rojas: El caballero de Olmedo," *Lope de Vega: el teatro*, ed. Antonio Sánchez Romeralo. *El Escritor y La Crítica*, 1 (London: Taurus, 1989), 101–17.

<sup>11</sup> Notably, Albrecht Classen's article in this volume examines fairies with a similarly prophetic function and similar properties to the ghosts I describe here.

consent of those mortals involved. This reinforces the notion of a structured universe where events are predestined, and it simultaneously undermines the ability of humanity to control or even to understand their environment. In other words, the world is ordered and events are predetermined, but not by us.

Alternatively, it might be an externalization of Alonso's fear and melancholy, an imaginary projection that doesn't truly exist outside of Alonso's experience. Alonso considers this possibility as well, calling the apparition the imagination of a sad man; he implies that his own fear and sadness could have created a phantom outside of his body and yet inside of his mind. The shadow, then, would represent a fault in Alonso's perception of the world. Critics have supported the different explanations to varying degrees and are rather divided in their opinions as to the origins of the figure. Francisco Rico, for example, asserts that the ghost was sent by Fabia,<sup>12</sup> and Helmy Giacomán agrees,<sup>13</sup> while José María Ruano de la Haza believes it is a figment of Alonso's imagination,<sup>14</sup> with which Everett Hesse agrees;<sup>15</sup> and Gwynne Edwards attributes it to melancholy.<sup>16</sup> It is worth noting that critics such as Alice Schafer,<sup>17</sup> Diego Bastianutti,<sup>18</sup> and Diego Marín,<sup>19</sup> whose work I rely on for this article, acknowledge and embrace the ambiguity of the figure and its indeterminate origin. Here I want to claim that the origin of the ghost cannot be divorced from its purpose and relationship to reality, so these diverse points of view regarding the nature of the phantom are important to engage with, as they indicate his tenuous connection to the so-called real world.

It is important to consider the differing implications of the varied explanations for the ghost's appearance. If it is a projection of Alonso's emotions, then it is not, strictly speaking, real, but rather imagined. If it has been sent by Fabia

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<sup>12</sup> Francisco Rico, "Introducción," *El caballero de Olmedo*, ed. Francisco Rico. Letras Hispánicas, 147 (Madrid: Cátedra, 1981), 13–99; here 47.

<sup>13</sup> Helmy F. Giacomán, "Eros y thanatos: Una interpretación de 'El caballero de Olmedo'" *Hispanófila* 28 (1966): 9–16; here 16.

<sup>14</sup> José María Ruano de la Haza, "Texto y contexto en 'El caballero de Olmedo' de Lope," *Criticón* 27 (1984): 37–53; here 49.

<sup>15</sup> Everett W. Hesse, "The Rôle of the Mind in Lope's *El caballero de Olmedo*," *Symposium: A Quarterly Journal in Modern Literatures* 19.1 (1965): 58–66; here 63.

<sup>16</sup> Gwynne Edwards, *Lope de Vega: Three Major Plays*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 287.

<sup>17</sup> Alice Schafer, "Fate Versus Responsibility in Lope's *El caballero de Olmedo*," *Revista Canadiense de Estudios Hispánicos* 3.1 (1978): 26–39.

<sup>18</sup> Diego Bastianutti, "'El caballero de Olmedo': Solo un ejercicio triste del alma," *Hispanófila*, Número especial dedicado a la comedia, 2 (1975): 25–38.

<sup>19</sup> Diego Marín, "La ambigüedad dramática en 'El caballero de Olmedo,'" *Hispanófila* 24 (1965): 1–11.

or by some otherworldly force, then it is a figure whose reality is external to Alonso; it is no longer imagined, but rather more objectively extant in the material world, since it exists outside of the mind of Alonso. These two distinct possibilities create a contradiction; both cannot be true at the same time, and neither can be certain while the other remains a possibility. The ghost is a figure that depends on interpretation; it is ambiguous and therefore incomplete. The audience must “complete” the figure by determining if they believe it to be real or not, thereby providing the missing elements of a full understanding of the ghost’s role in the play. Alonso models the same debate that the audience is guided to have, considering the various possible understandings of the figure (although, importantly, Alonso does not come to a final conclusion that could cement one interpretation as the truest). That different readers or viewers may disagree on the origin of the ghost after engaging with the same work reiterates the malleability of reality as presented here on the stage. The coexistence of various explanations positions the ghost in an overlapping, interstitial space between various possible truths. Because the reality of the figure is interpretive, it is no objective; it is therefore not a real figure, but neither can it be considered to be entirely unreal.

The ghost appears in an already strange and uncertain atmosphere in which Alonso is on-edge and fearful. The dark and gloomy atmosphere of Alonso’s encounter with the ghost begins to settle over the stage at the end of Act II, which is, incidentally, the moment when Alonso begins to witness strange omens that anticipate his death. Don Alonso, a knight from Olmedo visiting the city of Medina, has fallen in love with Inés. Inés, despite retuning Alonso’s love, is promised to Don Rodrigo. This, of course, pits Don Rodrigo against Don Alonso. Don Rodrigo suspects that Inés prefers Alonso and begins to develop a plot to kill his rival. Both men are slated to participate in a bullfight in Medina, and on the morning of the festivities, Alonso begins to feel a profound sense of unease. He awakens from a dream, which he does not describe, and steps outside to see a goldfinch killed in midair by a hawk. This is the first of three omens. It is clear that Alonso is represented by the goldfinch struck down mid-flight by the hawk that represents Rodrigo.<sup>20</sup>

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**20** For a complete analysis of the symbolism of the birds and the allegorical nature of this incident, see William McCrary, *The Goldfinch and the Hawk: A Study of Lope de Vega’s Tragedy, El caballero de Olmedo*. Studies in Romance Languages and Literatures, 62 (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 2017); H. Gaston Hall, “Observation and Symbolism in Lope de Vega’s ‘El caballero de Olmedo,’” *The Modern Language Review* 80 (1985): 62–79; J. W. Sage, *Lope de Vega: El caballero de Olmedo*. Critical Guides to Spanish Texts, 6 (London: Foyles, 1974).

The sense of unease induced in Alonso – by both his strange but unspecific dream and his observation of the goldfinch and the hawk – is not enough to prevent him from participating in the bull fight, Alonso saves Rodrigo's life by heroically killing the bull after Rodrigo has been thrown from his horse. Alonso then makes his return journey to Olmedo to visit his parents. Rodrigo, jealous of Alonso's heroics and more threatened by him as a romantic rival than ever, resolves to kill Alonso on the ride home. It is at the beginning of that trip that Alonso encounters the shadow-figure. Later, he crosses paths with a laborer who is singing a folksong that describes Alonso's death as if it had already occurred. Each of these three portentous encounters, which occur at the end of Act II and during Act III, predicts in one way or another Rodrigo's murder of Alonso on the road from Medina to Olmedo.

The interpretation of the *sombra* as a prophecy is informed by the ominous context in which it appears. The sense of dread that characterizes the scene is not created by the figure, but rather preexists, and the atmosphere certainly affects its reception. Not only does it appear in an eerie atmosphere, but its own physical appearance is also mysterious: "Al entrar, una SOMBRA con una máscara negra y sombrero, y puesta la mano en el puño de la espada, se le ponga delante."<sup>21</sup> (Enter a SHADOW with a black mask and hat, and with the hilt of his sword in hand, he steps in front of Alonso).<sup>22</sup> This description of a masked shadow depersonalizes the ghost, since it is not an identifiable person but rather simply a figure. Alan Paterson points out that the costuming of the figure is a practical issue; since it introduces itself as Don Alonso, the mask prevents the audience from immediately recognizing that it is not actually a duplicate of the protagonist's actor.<sup>23</sup> However, at the same time, the masking of the figure is a deliberate choice that allows for its ambiguity. As Ruano de la Haza notes: "La ambigüedad ... subsiste en el texto dramático, pero el director la podría resolver en su texto teatral permitiendo que los espectadores vieran el rostro de lo que Alonso cree ser una sombra"<sup>24</sup> (Ambiguity ... persists in the dramatic text, but the director could resolve it in his theatrical text by allowing viewers to see the face of what Alonso believes to be a ghost). If the figure is not a ghost, removing the mask would reveal that fact. With the figure masked, the audience cannot rule out that it is Don Alonso's double, nor can they confirm it. Instead, it is

<sup>21</sup> Félix Lope de Vega, *El caballero de Olmedo*, ed. Francisco Rico. Letras Hispánicas, 147 (Madrid: Cátedra, 1981), 191.

<sup>22</sup> All translations throughout are my own.

<sup>23</sup> Alan Paterson, "¿Quién esta canción te ha dado / que tristemente has cantado?" *Edad de Oro* 7 (1988): 129–42; here 134.

<sup>24</sup> Ruano de la Haza, "Texto y contexto" (see note 14), 50.

neither ghost, nor another supernatural figure, nor human, and therefore it can be all at once. It is represented by a human, but this does not necessarily signal its humanity, since in theater every actor must be understood as a stand-in for what they are not. Instead, the ghost is an inscrutable character who appears to an already unsettled protagonist, both elements which reinforce its ambiguity.

Furthermore, the appearance of the ghost is tonally similar to the omens that come both before and after it. All three are somewhat ambiguously supernatural and each affects the fear and anxiety of the protagonist, heightening his sense of dread as he makes his way home. The shadow's appearance between two other omens has contributed to the understanding that it represents a prognostication of Alonso's future. The similarities between the *sombra* and the *labrador* in particular, who are both mysterious and human-like figures who appear during the journey, may lead to a conflation of the apparitions. Even in the text, Alonso refers to a plural "avisos del cielo"<sup>25</sup> (warnings from the heavens) as he dies, and the song sung by the *labrador* also pluralizes the reference to the apparition: "sombras le avisaron / que no saliese"<sup>26</sup> (shadows warned him / not to leave). Leaving aside the implication that the figures were a warning, which Alonso appears to recognize only in hindsight, the pluralization of the word *aviso* implies that the shadow as well as the song were meant as warnings; they serve the same premonitory purpose. However, I must reiterate that the omen of the *sombra* is by no means concrete, and his relationship to the *labrador* is never elaborated. The shadow of Don Alonso is portentous only through its existence, since it does not speak or give any verbal prophecy, and, as I will explore further, its existence is not firmly objective.

Alonso's meeting with the shadow functions as an omen because the figure appears to introduce itself as Don Alonso. When the flesh and blood Alonso asks, "¿Quién es? Hable / ... / ¿Es don Rodrigo? ¿No dice / quién es?"<sup>27</sup> (Who is it? Speak / ... Is it Don Rodrigo? You won't say / who you are?), the *sombra* responds only with, "Don Alonso." Alonso asks the figure to repeat himself and again the *sombra* says "Don Alonso," but no other words are exchanged. It is not even entirely clear that the shadow's words are a direct response and self-identification. They could also merely be an acknowledgement of the man it has encountered.

Still, the ghost has been interpreted as a representation of Alonso's future, that is, of Alonso after his death. Paterson, for example, states: "El don Alonso vivo se encuentra con el don Alonso en el que se va a convertir: la sombra del

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<sup>25</sup> Lope de Vega, *El caballero de Olmedo* (see note 21), 199.

<sup>26</sup> Lope de Vega, *El caballero de Olmedo* (see note 21), 196.

<sup>27</sup> Lope de Vega, *El caballero de Olmedo* (see note 21), 191.

caballero anda y seguirá andando el camino entre Medina y Olmedo, como todos los que conocemos la canción bien sabemos” (The living Don Alonso meets the Don Alonso he will become: the shadow of the knight walks and will continue to walk the path between Medina and Olmedo, as all who know the song well know).<sup>28</sup> A meeting with Alonso’s own ghost is a frightening suggestion that he is already condemned to die, and in fact that his death is so certain that he is, effectively, already dead.

While it is important to acknowledge, as I have above, that Paterson’s interpretation may not be “accurate” and is certainly not the only possible interpretation, I also want to explore the implications of his understanding. Certainly, his analysis may be called into question purely on the basis that differing interpretations exist and cannot be disproven; however, neither can his be. In Paterson’s interpretation of the figure, the ghost represents a temporal break in the plot. In fact, César Domínguez points out that the omens represent “una fisura temporal” (a temporal fissure) that ruptures the chronology of the play,<sup>29</sup> as they predict and depict the future as something that already exists in the present. As Domínguez explains it, “El futuro habla con el presente” (The future speaks with the present).<sup>30</sup> This is the role of any portent of the future: they draw the future into the present and effectively communicate backward in time. In this particular case, the future is not only foretold, but represented as having *already occurred* in the present. Lope’s ghost-figure is unique in that it is the ghost of a man who is still physically alive.

A ghost like that of Princess Eliodora in Juan de la Cueva’s *El príncipe tirano*, who has already died, functions in the reverse. Eliodora is murdered in the first act by her younger brother, who wishes to inherit the throne instead of his sister. He is successful in covering up the murder until the ghost of the princess begins to appear to their father, the king. When the king is able to communicate with his daughter’s ghost, she tells him that she was murdered by her brother and the king imprisons him, thereby disinheriting him from the line of succession.<sup>31</sup> Eliodora is therefore entirely caught up in the past, as her function is to reveal past secrets. Further, as a figure who has already died, she herself is

<sup>28</sup> Paterson, “¿Quién esta canción te ha dado” (see note 23), 136.

<sup>29</sup> César Domínguez, “‘Las imaginaciones son espíritus sin cuerpo’. Aproximación al estudio de los sueños en el drama de Lope,” *Bulletin of Hispanic Studies* 75.3 (1998): 315–35; here 331.

<sup>30</sup> Domínguez, “Las imaginaciones” (see note 29), 334

<sup>31</sup> The play and its sequel continue on to explore the political implications of an unfit ruler, as the prince is eventually pardoned despite his crime and allowed to take over the kingdom. He rules as a tyrant until he is finally killed by the subjects he has victimized. The ghost’s warning regarding the prince’s violent nature is disregarded, but her purpose remains unchanged.



an embodiment of the past made present. The *sombra* in *El caballero de Olmedo*, understood as the (future) ghost of Alonso, implicates the present and future in its convolution of time, but seems to leave the past untouched. Juan de la Cueva's Eliodora is one example of a ghost concerned with the past, and is representative of a longer list of ghosts with a similar function. The *sombra* is therefore not only differentiated from her, but from a larger tradition of ghostly purpose. This ghost is peculiar in its disconnection from the past and from specific memories or events. This disconnection contributes to its ambiguity, in that neither Alonso nor the play's audience can associate it with any particular temporal touchstone.

Despite the ghost's lack of direct participation in the past, history remains fundamental to the action of *El caballero de Olmedo*.<sup>32</sup> Louise Fothergill-Payne points out two primary levels of history in the text: "uno que se refiere a la canción cuyos antecedentes se remontan al año 1521, y otro que sirve de tela de fondo para la tragedia y es el reinado de Juan II"<sup>33</sup> (One that refers to the song whose history dates back to 1521, and another that serves as the backdrop for the tragedy and is the reign of Juan II). The historical setting of the play reflects the era's popular trend of setting plays in historical periods, which in turn indicates a certain reverence or appreciation for times past. The song is, of course, the *romance* sung by the laborer that narrates the death of the knight from Olmedo.<sup>34</sup> Enrique Anderson Imbert points out that the ballad is based on the slaying of a knight on the road from Medina to Olmedo, but that Lope was likely not familiar with nor interested in the details of the song's history, and rather only in the lyrics upon which he bases his drama.<sup>35</sup> Because the audience would likely have been familiar with the popular song, Alonso's death is forecast even before the play begins. While the embodied ghost does not participate in history, the past, here represented by a song a century old, still haunts the stage.

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32 For a complete outline of the historical and literary sources of Lope's play, see Rico's introduction to his edition (see note 12).

33 Louise Fothergill-Payne, "El caballero de Olmedo y la razón de diferencia," *Bulletin of Hispanic Studies* 36.1 (1984): 111–24; here 113.

34 I refer throughout to the *labrador's* song as a *romance* because, as both Fothergill-Payne (see note 33) and Anderson Imbert (see note 35) point out, its lyrics are taken from a verse narrative belonging to the Spanish oral balladic tradition. Although the piece that is sung in Lope's play is merely an excerpt, the original work is indeed a complete *romance*.

35 Enrique Anderson Imbert, "Lope dramatiza un cantar," *Los grandes libros del occidente y otros ensayos: La Celestina, Shakespeare, Lope de Vega, Palma, Zorrilla de San Martín, Shaw, Valle-Inclán, Proust, Azorín, Ramón Jiménez, Lynch, Güiraldes, etc.* Colección Literaria, 5 (México: Ediciones de Andrea, 1957), 11–18; here 65.

Anderson Imbert also spends some time reflecting on the nature of the *romance* and, in doing so, parallels Marvin Carlson's analysis of memory and repetition in theater. Carlson's *The Haunted Stage: Theater as Memory Machine* focuses on the connection of ghosts to memory in order to show that theater is an inherently haunted art. The crux of his argument lies in the repetition of theater, though not exclusively in the repetition of performances. Instead, he examines the stories that theater tells as well as the bodies and materials used to tell them and the places in which they are told. Genre, he argues, relies on recognition by the audience, thereby relying on memory and ghosts. Theater is a form that tends to repeat genre and tropes, thereby marking it as haunted. According to Carlson, the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in particular contain theatrical works of "citation," although they are not presented as such. Furthermore, the repetition of the same actors in different roles in different plays as well as repeated sets or even the repeated use of the stage and theater itself causes a haunting in the reception of any given performance. Because the *romance* is an oral tradition, it follows a similar pattern. As the ballads move from one singer to the next, new versions are created:

Y así, en boca de innumerables – e innombrables – Juanes, Pedros y Diegos, el cantar vive en pleno pulmón, de variante en variante, rehecho constantemente por una memoria fantasmal, como si fuera la manifestación espontánea de un pueblo desparramado por los siglos.<sup>36</sup>

[And so, in the mouths of innumerable – and unnamable – Juans, Pedros and Diegos, the song lives the lung, variant to variant, remade constantly by a ghost memory, as if it were the spontaneous manifestation of a people scattered through centuries.]

While there are obvious differences between the *romance* and the stage – primary among them being that theater is *performed* differently each time it is staged but its words remain largely unchanged – Anderson Imbert's words evoke the same notion of haunting and repetition as Carlson's text. To stage a *romance*, then, relies doubly on memory and creates new forms of phantom.

Alonso is, in the eyes of the knowing audience, a dead man walking even before the apparition of his ghost. In this, he echoes the phantasmagorical figure of Cervantes' *El cerco de la Numancia*, a play published in the 1580s that is based on the historical siege of the Celtiberian city of Numancia by the Roman army. A dead man inside the besieged walls is revived by a magician in order to reveal the city's future to its inhabitants; of course, the audience watching a play written hundreds of years later already knows that the city will fall, as it has already fallen. The

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<sup>36</sup> Anderson Imbert, "Lope dramatiza un cantar" (see note 35), 63.

function of the prophesizing ghost is therefore fundamentally changed. The Numancian body does not reveal an unknown future to the play's audience, but rather confirms what is already understood to be the conclusion of the play, thereby reinforcing his own omniscience. Similarly, the function of the *sombra* is not to announce Alonso's death to the public; his death is already known:

termina con la muerte del protagonista, pero no con una muerte inesperada o accidental, sino con un asesinato, premeditado y anunciado, hacia el que don Alonso se dirige como movido por una especie de destino inexorable.

[it ends with the death of the protagonist, but not an unexpected or accidental death, but rather a murder, premeditated and announced, toward which Don Alonso is directed as if moved by a sort of inexorable destiny.]<sup>37</sup>

Instead, it promotes fear, reflects the uncertainty of the protagonist through its ambiguity, and demonstrates to the audience the moment in which Alonso's death becomes absolutely predetermined, or at least revealed as predetermined, in his own life. His encounter with the ghost reveals that Alonso no longer possesses agency; instead, he must continue to his death, which has, in some dimension, already occurred.

Another explanation for the ghost that Alonso considers is that it was sent by Fabia at Inés's urging in an attempt to dissuade him from making his journey. Alonso understands that there is something supernatural about the *sombra*, and so Fabia, who is purportedly a witch, springs to mind. Indeed, when Alonso asks the *labrador* where he learned his song, he does indicate that Fabia taught it to him, suggesting that she is responsible for his encounter with Alonso. However, it is never clear what role, if any, Fabia plays in the appearance of the *sombra*. In fact, it is important to note the extent to which Fabia's alleged abilities have been questioned by critics such as Ruano de la Haza,<sup>38</sup> Anderson Imbert,<sup>39</sup> Bruce Wardropper,<sup>40</sup> and Frank Casa,<sup>41</sup> who point out that Alonso was already in love with Inés, and Inés with Alonso, before Fabia got involved with her love potions. Her role, therefore, is not magical or supernatural but rather strictly as a facilitator

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37 Celsa Carmen García Valdés, "El caballero de Olmedo: tragedia y parodia," *Del horror a la risa: Los géneros dramáticos clásicos: homenaje ...*, ed. Christiane Faliu-Lacourt, Ignacio Arellano, Víctor García Ruiz, and Marc Vitse. Estudios de Literatura, 21 (Kassel: Reichenberger, 1994), 137–60; here 152.

38 Ruano de la Haza, "Texto y contexto" (see note 14)

39 Anderson Imbert, "Lope dramatiza un cantar" (see note 35).

40 Bruce Wardropper, "The Criticism of the Spanish Comedia: El caballero de Olmedo as Object Lesson," *Philological Quarterly* 51.1 (1972): 177–96.

41 Frank Casa, "The Dramatic Unity of El caballero de Olmedo," *Neophilologus* 50.1 (1966): 234–43.

of their meetings: she “is needed as a go-between but not as an hechicera.”<sup>42</sup> Her ability to summon a ghost is, therefore, in question. Clarity in Fabia’s abilities would in turn provide clarity regarding her role in the apparition, since if she could not summons ghosts at all the possibility that she had summoned this shadow figure would be eliminated entirely. The lack of explanation as to the actual extent and limit of Fabia’s witchcraft contributes to the overall ambiguity where the supernatural is concerned in this play.

If the ghost was not sent by Fabia, it remains possible that it is some other supernatural agent meant to caution Alonso to turn back. An interpretation of the *sombra* as a warning is different from an omen because, as we have seen, the omen does not intend to change the future, while the warning still leaves space for an unpredicted ending. There are certainly readers who interpret Alonso’s death as at least potentially avoidable; Alice Schafer notes: “Prolepsis fulfills its mission here perfectly, for it suggests a spine-chilling fear in the audience, whilst at the same time it awakens the hope that Alonso may also be fearful enough to retrace his steps”<sup>43</sup> Although that hope proves to be fruitless, the question remains as to whether or not it would have been possible for Alonso to avoid his “fate.”

An interpretation of the ghost as a warning does not necessarily disallow Alonso’s free will. The function of the warning is dissuasion. Alonso is warned, albeit subtly and supernaturally, not to make the journey to Olmedo. However, he chooses to press forward *despite* several portents. The “predestined” events could therefore possibly be avoided, if only Alonso had heeded the warnings given. Diego Marín notes:

Según [el concepto del libre albedrío frente al sino] la vida del hombre puede ser influida por los cuerpos celestes y otras fuerzas misteriosas del cosmos, pero su albedrío permanece siempre libre y capaz de alterar su curso predestinado.<sup>44</sup>

[According (to the concept of free will versus destiny) the life of a man can be influenced by heavenly bodies and other mysterious cosmic forces, but his will remains forever free and capable of altering his predestined course.]

While the omens suggest, through the pre-enactments of Alonso’s death, that at least part of his course is already set, they also ostensibly provide him with the opportunity to make a different choice. Rodrigo may already be waiting in

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<sup>42</sup> Casa, “Dramatic Unity” (see note 41), 238.

<sup>43</sup> Schafer, “Fate Versus Responsibility” (see note 17), 35.

<sup>44</sup> Marín, “La ambigüedad dramática” (see note 19), 6.

the woods to kill Alonso, but Alonso still has the opportunity to turn back and prevent his death.

It is unclear exactly how much control Alonso could have demonstrated over his own future. The premonitions grow increasingly concrete; the goldfinch and the hawk are merely a metaphorical representation of Alonso's death, while the shadow's existence is a suggestion that he is *already* dead, and the song is a direct statement that he is. This would seem to indicate that Alonso's death also grows increasingly certain, and that at some point during the night it might become inevitable, as if Alonso, on the road to Olmedo, crosses a point of no return. The shadow appears as he departs, and so it is difficult to believe that it is already too late for him to save himself by turning back. But the apparition indicates that Alonso has already made his choice. The shadow, then, does not function as much as a warning but rather as a premonition of inevitable doom. The apparition of Don Alonso's ghost instead indicates to the audience that this is the moment in which he dies. This is the moment in which he makes the decision that ends his life.

A further argument against the notion of the ghost as being a premonitory warning is that it is incredibly unclear in its communications. The *sombra* hardly speaks at all and in no way effectively communicates to Alonso what his future will be. Although Alonso, as he dies, considers the three omens to be "avisos del cielo" (warnings from heaven),<sup>45</sup> it is only with the benefit of hindsight that he understands what they would have been trying to tell him. Arellano points out that the omens cannot function as warnings, precisely because they are so ineffectual: "¿Qué avisos del cielo podrían mostrarse con tal ambigüedad que el caballero no pudiera discernir claramente su sentido?"<sup>46</sup> (What warnings from heaven could show themselves with such ambiguity that the knight could not clearly understand their meaning?). The ambiguity of the ghost once again demonstrates its effect by undercutting its ability to communicate a coherent message or transmit its true purpose.

These interpretations, however convincing they may be, all hinge on the assumption that the ghost is brought forth by an external supernatural force, whether that be Fabia or some greater universal supernatural. This is an interpretation, not a fact. It is not even certain that the figure is the ghost of Alonso; although the shadow appears to introduce itself as Don Alonso, it is also possible that its words are meant to address the living, breathing Don Alonso rather than to introduce itself. Still, the figure remains eerie and somewhat unreal in

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45 Lope de Vega, *El caballero de Olmedo* (see note 21), 199.

46 Arellano, "Estructura dramática" (see note 1), 105.

any context; even if its words are not an introduction, one must wonder how it knows Don Alonso's name, why it wears a mask, and how it disappears as suddenly as it does. The particulars of what exactly its purpose is are left unclear.

In fact, it is possible that it is not exactly an omen at all, but rather some sort of imagined vision with no greater purpose. I have shown that the figure lacks a specific, discernable connection to the past, which most ghosts possess, and explored the possibility that its connection is only to the future that he foretells. However, I have not yet addressed the possibility that it exists only in the present as a reflection of Alonso's immediate and temporary emotions. In this analysis, the ghost exists only within Alonso's imagination and is therefore not entirely or objectively real.

The ghost appears into an atmosphere of fear and darkness that begins toward the end of Act II. Gwynne Edwards notes: "Alonso's account of his dream marks the moment when the play changes from a mood which is often comic to one that is increasingly dark."<sup>47</sup> Although Alonso claims not to pay much attention to his dreams, he admits to feeling perturbed by this one. The sense of unease it causes him stays with him for the remainder of his life and hangs over the remainder of the play. Arellano describes it as:

Una atmósfera de maravilla, de misterio ominoso que va dominando la acción en contraste con las fiestas primaverales de la cruz de mayo y los galanteos nocturnos a la reja de los jardines.<sup>48</sup>

[An atmosphere of marvel, or ominous mystery that dominates the action in contrast to the spring festival of the Cruz de Mayo and the nocturnal wooing at the garden gates.]

He further explains that: "Lope dispone estos elementos de modo que persiste una ambigüedad, propio del reino de lo poético."<sup>49</sup> (Lope uses these elements in such a way that ambiguity persists, as in the realm of the poetic). The emotional backdrop of the final act of the play is one of uncertainty, and so the figures who appear in this environment are shrouded by the same ambiguity.

The melancholic atmosphere at once affects and is affected by the protagonist, who may be suffering from the disease of unnatural melancholy.<sup>50</sup> The disease, as explained by Burton, is an illness of black bile or choler. He explains: "fear and sorrow are the true characters and inseparable companions of most

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<sup>47</sup> Edwards, *Lope de Vega* (see note 16), 287.

<sup>48</sup> Arellano, "Estructura dramática" (see note 1), 110.

<sup>49</sup> Arellano, "Estructura dramática" (see note 1), 110.

<sup>50</sup> Edwards, *Lope de Vega* (see note 16), 287.

melancholy.”<sup>51</sup> His text enumerates many causes and symptoms of melancholy as they affect different sufferers, but at the core of almost all his explanations is fear and sorrow, with frequent references to dreams and dreamlike thoughts as well as unreal visions, spirits, and ghosts. Regarding Alonso’s experience of an excess of melancholy, Diego Bastianutti writes:

Lope ha creado un personaje melancólico cuyos síntomas no sólo explican la conducta del protagonista, sino que ofrecen también una explicación racional para los acontecimientos misteriosos, desde el sueño de don Alonso hasta el romance cantado por el labrador, sin quitarle por eso aquel aire de misterio a la obra.<sup>52</sup>

[Lope has created a melancholic character whose symptoms not only explain his conduct but rather also offer a rational explanation for the mysterious events, from Don Alonso’s dream to the song sung by the laborer, without taking away from the play’s air of mystery.]

This diagnosis of unnatural melancholy provides a medical explanation for all of Alonso’s strange experiences, since visions of the unreal are known to be a symptom of melancholy. Furthermore, the effect of Alonso’s illness would provoke him to experience fear and sadness, which would in turn increase his body’s production of the melancholic humor and heighten his experience of the symptoms of melancholy.

The melancholic atmosphere of the final act is used as evidence by some critics to show a division in the dramatic unity of the play.<sup>53</sup> This division splits the play into a comedy for the first two acts and then, for the final act, a tragedy. The focus of the comedy is the love story that develops between Alonso and Inés, beginning with love at first sight at the very opening of the play. The final act, meanwhile, turns toward Alonso’s inevitable death. Critically, several scholars such as Albert Gérard,<sup>54</sup> A. Parker,<sup>55</sup> and Wardropper<sup>56</sup> have pushed back against the notion of a division in the structure of the play. They argue instead that there is a unity of theme – love – and that the play shifts from a comedy to a tragedy

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51 Robert Burton, *The Anatomy of Melancholy*, ed. Holbrook Jackson (London: Vintage Books, 1977), 170.

52 Bastianutti, “Solo un ejercicio triste del alma” (see note 18), 27.

53 See Edwards, *Lope de Vega* (see note 16) and Marcelino Menéndez Pelayo, “Observaciones preliminares,” *Obras de Lope de Vega, publicadas por la Real academia española*, vol. 10 (Madrid: Real Academia Española, 1890–1913).

54 Albert S. Gérard, “Baroque Unity and the Dualities of ‘El Caballero de Olmedo,’” *Romanic Review* 56.2 (1965): 102–05.

55 Alexander Parker, “The Approach to the Spanish Drama of the Golden Age: A Method of Critical Analysis and Interpretation,” *The Great Playwrights: Twenty-Five Plays with Commentaries by Critics and Scholars*, ed. Eric Bentley (New York: Doubleday, 1970), 679–707.

56 Wardropper, “Criticism” (see note 40).

in a deliberate and gradual manner. As Paterson points out, “El amor se transforma en la muerte.”<sup>57</sup> (Love becomes death). This transformation happens both on a narrative level, as the romance shifts toward its tragic ending, but also within the character of Alonso himself.

Throughout the play, Alonso has alluded to a feeling that he is dead or dying as a result of his feelings of love. His love for Inés causes his death in a literal sense, since it ignites the jealousy that drives Rodrigo to murder him, but even long before the denouement, love and death are inextricably woven together for Alonso. When Alonso believes his love for Inés is unrequited, it feels like death. When he knows his love is requited but is unsure of their future together, it feels like death. And, finally, when he must leave her in Medina while he travels home to visit his parents in Olmedo, it feels like death. In his last conversation with Inés before he departs, he lays out the metaphor of his separation from her as his death: “Así se acabó mi vida, / que es lo mismo que partirme” (Thus my life ends / which is the same as leaving).<sup>58</sup>

While Alonso believes this statement to be figurative, there is an ironic twist to his metaphor. The audience knows that while Alonso speaks symbolically, he will indeed die as a result of his departure. Alonso has repeatedly travelled between Medina and Olmedo, leaving Inés behind again and again. Wardropper comments: “Each time [Alonso] absents himself from Doña Inés he rehearses the act of dying.”<sup>59</sup> This final absence results in his most absolute absence, that is, his death. Each previous separation has been temporary; they have been, as Wardropper calls them, merely rehearsals. The apparition of Alonso’s ghost is a physical manifestation of his separation from Inés, and therefore of his lovesickness. Here the motif of the dying lover is rendered literally.

For Alonso, then, love causes him to die while still alive; the pains he feels as a result of love and its absence cause him to experience a feeling that he likens to death during life. At the point that he decides to return to Olmedo, Rodrigo has already begun to plan Alonso’s murder and his demise is no longer merely a metaphor. Instead, it is a certain future. It is in this moment that the ghost appears. The ghost represents the final convergence of love and death: “The death-in-life paradox of the play’s love poetry is hideously resolved in this moment of utter terror when the future becomes the past.”<sup>60</sup> The moment here referred to is actually the song of the *labrador*, when Alonso’s death is sung in

<sup>57</sup> Paterson, “¿Quién esta canción?” (see note 23), 136.

<sup>58</sup> Lope de Vega, *El caballero de Olmedo* (see note 21), 191.

<sup>59</sup> Wardropper, “Criticism” (see note 40), 192.

<sup>60</sup> Melveena McKendrick, *Theater in Spain, 1490–1700* (New York and Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 104.



the past tense, but his ghost similarly crosses temporalities and indicates his imminent death. Furthermore, the *sombra* appears in the right moment, just as Alonso embarks and thereby separates from Inés. Alonso's love for Inés and his separation from her have finally sparked his literal death, and the fact that the ghost appears in this moment therefore comes to represent Alonso's dual and divided state. Alonso's ghost appears to him while he is still alive, meaning that he is both alive and dead at once; his death is real in the sense that it is imminent, and this is enough to create the ghost.

Because his death is so certain, it is essentially allowed to occur twice. As Alonso prepares to leave Inés in Medina, he tells Tello: "Las penas anticipadas / dicen que matan dos veces"<sup>61</sup> (Anticipated pain / they say kills twice). He feels the pain of leaving Inés as he prepares to do it, and again when he does. His end is similar: its anticipation and its undertaking kill him twice. The ghost, in this sense, is created by Alonso's emotions. His despair, which is part and parcel of his immense love, produces a phantom. Similarly, Ruano de la Haza calls the *sombra* and the *labrador* "la culminación de los miedos de Alonso" (the culmination of Alonso's fears),<sup>62</sup> thereby establishing emotion, this time fear, as the shadow's creator. Lope has already set up a metaphor of emotions creating monsters; the emotion is jealousy, not fear or sadness, but it paves the way for this interpretation of the ghost. When Rodrigo is jealous of Alonso, because he is sure that Inés loves his rival, Fernando reassures him by saying:

Son celos, don Rodrigo, una quimera  
que se forma de envidia, viento y sombra,  
con lo incierto imaginado altera;  
una fantasma que de noche asombra,  
un pensamiento que a locura inclina,  
y una mentira que verdad se nombra.<sup>63</sup>

[Jealousy is, Don Rodrigo, a chimera  
made of envy, wind and shadow,  
that alters with the uncertain and imagined;  
a ghost that approaches by night,  
a thought inclined toward madness,  
and a lie that calls itself truth.]

Essentially, Fernando is explaining that emotions skew perceptions. Vision is not an objective reporter of the world around us, but rather a means by which

<sup>61</sup> Lope de Vega, *El caballero de Olmedo* (see note 21), 174.

<sup>62</sup> Ruano de la Haza, "Texto y contexto" (see note 14), 48

<sup>63</sup> Lope de Vega, *El caballero de Olmedo* (see note 21), 157.

we interpret information through the lens of our own individual and subjective feelings. A particularly strong emotion can become externalized and, living outside the body, influence our experience of the world toward an untrue one. Ironically, what Fernando writes off as the phantoms created by jealousy is, in fact, reality. Inés is in love with Alonso and will indeed choose him over Rodrigo, just as the latter fears. While Fernando is incorrect in his assessment in this particular scene, his explanation of the role of emotion in perception provides a possible explanation for Alonso's visions near the end of the play.

Whether we believe that the *sombra* and the *labrador* are created by an excess of the melancholic humor or the strong emotions that Alonso experiences, we must explore the effect that this belief has on our understanding of perception. To accept that the vision is false is to accept that perception sometimes fails. Alonso's eyes and ears have observed and reported a shadow to his mind, and that shadow may not have actually existed. While it might be of some comfort to understand that it happens due to a natural, measurable and, ultimately, explainable disease, the essential admission underlying that understanding is that the human body is not always able to adequately interpret the world. In other words, it is possible that what we consider to be true, to be evident, or to be concrete, is in fact none of those things. Our perception of the world around us is artificial, an *engaño* that tricks us into believing that we understand. A ghost is a reminder that we do not; there is so much of existence and reality that we do not have access to.

In the third act of the play, because of his sadness at the thought of parting with Inés, Alonso demonstrates an emotional and perceptual instability that makes it easy to believe that the ghost is imagined. As Bastianutti remarks:

Don Alonso ha llegado a tal punto de confusión mental que ya no logra distinguir lo que ve de lo que imagina. En la escena de su vuelta a Olmedo, tanto el protagonista como el lector están dispuestos a aceptar la posibilidad de que aun el labrador que canta el romance y aparece en escena, sea creación de la imaginación de don Alonso, acostumbrados como estamos a sus previas visiones y sueños.<sup>64</sup>

[Don Alonso has come to a point of such mental confusion that he can no longer distinguish what he sees from what he imagines. In the scene of his return to Olmedo, both the protagonist and the reader are ready to accept the possibility that even the laborer who sings the ballad and appears onstage is a creation of Alonso's imagination, accustomed as we are to his previous visions and dreams.]

Beginning with his account of the goldfinch and the hawk, and the reference to the strange dream from which he awoke to witness them, there has been a marked

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<sup>64</sup> Bastianutti, "Solo un ejercicio triste del alma" (see note 18), 34

shift in Alonso's behavior that betrays his untrustworthiness. His emotional unease and his strange experiences could be the cause or the effect of the ghost and omens, but it is never clear to the reader which catalyzes the other. Does Alonso see ghosts because he is unstable, or is he unstable because he has seen a ghost? This ghost breeds instability and is born of it; every bit of uncertainty that surrounds it contributes to its ambiguity, which in turn catalyzes its deconstruction of reality.

Without knowing if the fear or the ghost has come first, it is difficult to determine the figure's origin and therefore its function. There is enough textual evidence to support either an understanding of the *sombra* as an unreal effect of melancholy or imagination or as a truly extant figure sent or created by an external source to represent a predetermined future. The profound ambiguity of the figure muddles the human understanding of death and destiny. Because the omen represented by the ghost is so vague and uncertain – it may not even be an omen, strictly speaking – the whole notion of predestination must be questioned. Ultimately the future represented by the prophetic understanding of the ghost does come to pass, that is, Alonso dies on the road from Medina to Olmedo. Perhaps he was propelled to a certain death by fate, because his death was already written. Or perhaps the ghost was merely an externalization of his fear that he would die.

*El caballero de Olmedo* is in many ways defined and founded on its mysteries, including the mysterious figure of the ghost. In fact, Wardropper introduces the play by commenting:

The first observation that I shall make is that the play has always appealed to audiences and readers because of its mystery. A hero who does not believe in ghosts is brought face-to-face with his own ghost ... Does he, and do we, see a ghost on the road from Medina to Olmedo? All we can say is that the appearance of a ghost and the traditionally assumed effect of a ghost assail our senses.<sup>65</sup>

Wardropper alludes to the potential nonexistence of the ghost by asking the fundamental question as to whether or not we have seen it. The *appearance* of a ghost is present, but anything beyond the mere façade is uncertain. This *sombra* is an exemplary ambiguous ghost whose appearance deconstructs the notion of reality. When Donald Yates asks of the play's setting, "Was it a world of fact, of reality – or of half fact and half fantasy?"<sup>66</sup> the answer is both. There is no singular understanding of the mysterious world presented by Lope.

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<sup>65</sup> Wardropper, "Criticism" (see note 40), 188.

<sup>66</sup> Donald Yates, "The Poetry of the Fantastic in 'El caballero de Olmedo,'" *Hispania* 43.4 (1960): 503–07; here 506.

The *sombra* is an *engaño* – a deception. It is all artifice with nothing concrete behind it. Its theatricality is not limited to its staged presence but is rather fundamental to its character. Its presence is a small performance for Alonso, the meaning or intention of which is entirely unclear. The ghost's ability to convey any fundamental truth is severely undercut by its ambiguous perception in such a way that the only possible truth lies in that ambiguity. The ambiguity comes to define the ghost as a Baroque entity, as a visual trick that serves to highlight and reinforce its own obscurity. Its *engaño*, therefore, becomes his truth. It is both *engaño* and *desengaño* at once; by obscuring reality it reveals the truth. Its revelation is this: there is no defined purpose or meaning, at least not that humanity can perceive. Our reality (or our perception of it) will always be incomplete and absurd, like Maravall's world upside-down. The *sombra*, through his own internal contradiction of being simultaneously real and unreal, embodies, as it were, the omnipresent deception, disillusion, and doubt that fascinated the Spanish Golden Age. In doing so, it is a uniquely Baroque figure that is a product of its own time. However, simultaneously, it represents that which is inherent in ghosts and therefore that which exists prior to modernity and which outlives it. A ghost is always – always – something of a bridge: between life and death, presence and absence, past and present, and the real and the imaginary.

Thomas Willard

## Fantasy, Imagination, and Vision in Thomas Vaughan's *Lumen de Lumine*

In April of 1651, the thirty-year-old Welshman Thomas Vaughan released what he said would be his last “discourse.”<sup>1</sup> It was also to be the key to his first, published the previous year and the subject of a protracted debate.<sup>2</sup> Vaughan would continue to write books under the pseudonym Eugenius Philalethes (“well-born lover of truth”), but this new one would be unlike anything else he ever wrote. It began as a dream vision in rhymed couplets, then switched to the “low *Dialect*” of prose as it told of his persona’s encounter with the nature goddess Thalia (“the flourishing one”), who guides him through the underground region where alchemists thought the various metals grew. She leaves him on the bank of a river – no doubt the River Usk in Vaughan’s native Breconshire – but not without “certain *peeeces of Gold*” and “a *paper* folded like a *Letter*” (21). The paper turns out to be a “map” of the dream world through which she has guided him (25). Vaughan’s persona is reminded of a “letter” sent by the Rosicrucian Fraternity to prospective members (26). Then, after discussing the symbolism in the map and letter, Eugenius/Vaughan offers a series of comments on features of the map.

Vaughan’s modern editors have sought analogies for the engraved map, designated the “*Scholae Magicae Typus*” (“Image of the School of Magic”), as

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1 Eugenius Philalethes (pseudonym of Thomas Vaughan), *Lumen de Lumine: Or a new Magicall Light discovered and Communicated to the World* (London: H. Blunden, 1651), B4v; hereafter *LL*. Quotations from Vaughan’s work preserve the spelling, punctuation, and typographical choices of the time, including alternations between Roman and Italic type and the use of capital letters with key words that continued in English books for another two centuries.

2 Eugenius Philalethes (Thomas Vaughan), *Anthroposophia Theomagica: Or a Discourse of the Nature of Man and his state after death* (London: H. Blunden, 1650); hereafter *AT*. This discourse was printed and bound with *Anima Magica Abscondita* (London: H. Blunden, 1650); hereafter *AMA*. On the debate over these texts, see Thomas Willard, “Goddess and Guide or Machine and Treasury?: Seventeenth-Century Debate about the Role of Nature,” *Paradigm Shifts During the Global Middle Ages and Early Modern Age: Epochs, Epistemes, and Cultural-Historical Concepts*, ed. Albrecht Classen. Arizona Studies in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, 44 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2019), 355–82.

well as the Rosicrucian document.<sup>3</sup> However, there are more immediate sources in German publications that followed the printing of the original Rosicrucian documents – the so-called manifestos – in the second decade of the seventeenth century.<sup>4</sup> In this paper, I plan to identify and discuss a source for the image and another one for the letter, each of which asks readers to exercise their imaginations. But first I must explain what imagination meant to Vaughan and his original readers.

## Imagination and Spirituality

In the introduction to his far-reaching survey of spiritual writing in the Western tradition, the German philosopher and historian Wilhelm Schmidt-Biggemann discusses the central role of imagination:

Imagination is required to conceive of a world that, in a certain way, is a counter-world to the ‘real’ one. Only if such a counter-world exists, does the ‘real’ one receive a temporal dimension. The world to come – the future of the present world – is, of course, only imagined. The same is true for the historical worlds that were real in the past. In the present they do not exist, except in the imagination. Spiritual reality is thus not far removed from present reality; it rather constitutes the frame of present reality, which is interlaced with fantasies, desires, wishes and memories.<sup>5</sup>

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**3** *The Works of Thomas Vaughan (Eugenius Philalethes)*, ed. Arthur Edward Waite (London: Theosophical Publishing House, 1919), 259; and *The Works of Thomas Vaughan*, ed. Alan Rudrum and Jennifer Drake Brockman. Oxford English Texts (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982), 679.

**4** See Frances A. Yates, *The Rosicrucian Enlightenment* (London: Routledge, 1972) and, for details about the original writings, Carlos Gilly, *Cimelia Rhodostauritica: Die Rosenkreuzer im Spiegel der zwischen 1610 und 1660 entstandenen Handschriften und Drucke* (Amsterdam: Bibliotheca Philosophica Hermetica, 1995). In an earlier contribution to the Fundamentals series, I have suggested that the original Rosicrucian story had a truth other than literal, one that might be called “mythic or imaginative.” See Thomas Willard, “The Strange Journey of Christian Rosencreutz,” *East Meet West in the Middle Ages and Early Modern Time: Transcultural Experiences in the Premodern World*, ed. Albrecht Classen. Fundamentals of Medieval and Early Modern Culture, 14 (Berlin and Boston: Walter de Gruyter, 2013), 667–97; here 668.

**5** Wilhelm Schmidt-Biggemann, *Philosophia perennis: Historical Outlines of Western Spirituality in Ancient, Medieval and Early Modern Thought*. International Archives of the History of Ideas, 189 (Dordrecht, NL: Springer, 2004), 4. Schmidt-Biggemann notes (xii) that the book is “more of a reworking than a mere translation” of the original version, *Philosophia perennis: Historische Umriss der abendländische Spiritualität in Antike, Mittelalter und Früher Neuzeit* (Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 1998).

Schmidt-Biggemann thinks of this “counter-world” (in German: *Gegenwelt*) as a “spiritual world” that “consists of what is recounted about it, of myths, revelations, experiences.” He adds: “Its psychological status lies between pure fiction and banal, tangible reality.” Even though this world is always said to be revealed, it can be perceived through imagination, in much the way that a literary world is experienced.<sup>6</sup> Since he first advanced these ideas, other scholars have argued that imagination should be an important consideration in studies of religious histories as they have been written by both supporters and critics.<sup>7</sup>

It seems clear that Vaughan, in choosing to write in the literary genre of the dream vision, is producing an imaginative world.<sup>8</sup> We must note, however, that the word “imagination” can be positive or negative for Vaughan, depending on whose imagination it is. If it is nature’s imagination, it is positive. Nature is said to “generate *perpetually*, and imprint her *conceptions* in the *matter*, communicating life to it, and *figuring* [i.e., shaping] it according to her *Imagination*.”<sup>9</sup> That is to say, nature imposes her images of God’s plan on the material creation. However, there are also “certaine *spirits*; which *dabble lasciviously* with the *sperm* of the *world*, and imprint their *Imaginations* in producing many times fantastic, and monstrous *Generations*” (LL, 25). Here the word “fantastic” is used in the now obsolete

6 Schmidt-Biggemann, *Philosophia perennis* (see note 5), 3.

7 See Lucia Traut and Annette Wilke, “Einleitung,” *Religion – Imagination – Ästhetik: Vorstellungen und Sinneswelten in Religion und Kultur*, ed. Annette Wilke and Lucia Traut. Critical Studies in Religion, 7 (Göttingen: V&R Academic, 2014), 17–33. Also see Wouter J. Hannegraaff, “Religion and the Historical Imagination: Esoteric Tradition as Poetic Invention,” *Dynamics of Religion: Past and Present*, ed. Christoph Bochinger, Jörg Rüpke, and Elisabeth Begemann. Religionsgeschichtliche Versuche und Vorarbeiten, 67 (Berlin and Boston: Walter de Gruyter, 2017), 131–54.

8 One famous dream vision, *Le Roman de la rose* (“The Romance of the Rose,” by Guillaume de Lorris, ca. 1230) was expanded considerably by Jean de Meun (before 1285) to include a commentary on the rose as an alchemical substance. A Latin paraphrase of this commentary appears as Johann a Mehung, “Demonstratio Naturae,” *Musaeum Hermeticum Reformatum et Amplificatum* (Frankfurt a. M.: Hermann von Sande, 1677), 145–79; an English translation is available as “Nature’s Confession” in *The Romance of the Rose*, ed. and trans. Frances Horgan (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 259–99. On the relation of the original poem and the expansion, see Ernst Robert Curtius, *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages*, trans. Willard R. Trask. Bollingen Library, 36 (1948; New York: Pantheon Press, 1953), 124–27. On the Chaucerian tradition of the dream vision, influenced by the *Roman de la rose*, see most recently “Dream Poetry,” *The Norton Chaucer*, ed. David Lawton (New York and London: W. W. Norton, 2019), 945–46.

9 Eugenius Philalethes (Thomas Vaughan), *Magia Adamica: or The Antiquitie of Magic and The Descent thereof from Adam downwards, proved* (London: H. Blunden, 1650), 92–93. See page 28 for Vaughan’s best statement about the need for a map to lead one through nature to God.

sense of “fabulous, imaginary, unreal.”<sup>10</sup> When Vaughan uses the noun “fancy,” it is usually in the negative sense of “delusive imagination.”<sup>11</sup> As a minister of the Church of England, Vaughan was steeped in the authorized (King James) version of the Bible, which uses “imagination” in the famous Magnificat, when God is said to have “scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts.”<sup>12</sup> Moreover, as a student of Paracelsian medicine, he knew that a person’s imagination could cause illness if he or she was turned away from God, in whose image humans were made.<sup>13</sup>

A third and more consistently positive term for Vaughan is “vision,” in the English word’s original sense of something “seen otherwise than by ordinary sight; *esp.* an appearance of a prophetic or mystical character.”<sup>14</sup> In the biblical tradition, visions have a divine origin, from the visions of Abraham and Jacob to those of the disciples who see the transfigured Jesus, standing beside Moses and Elijah, or see a vision of angels who say the crucified Jesus is alive (Genesis 15:1 and 46:2; Matthew 17:9; Luke 24:23). Vaughan thought that such vision could come through a significant dream or through the workings of nature.<sup>15</sup> He never used the word “visionary” in its substantive or adjectival sense, each of which was only coming into the language when he wrote, but his modern editor Arthur Edward Waite found both senses highly appropriate to his work.<sup>16</sup>

In the pre-modern world, before the concept of imagination was exalted by Romantic poets and philosophers, it was part of a faculty psychology that dated back to Aristotle. Faculty psychology assumes that the mind has different faculties or functions, including perception, memory, judgment, and will. Aristotle maintained that “Imagination is different from either perceiving or discursive thinking, though it is not found without sensation or judgment without it.”<sup>17</sup>

<sup>10</sup> The Oxford English Dictionary online, “fantastic, *adj.* 1a” (last accessed on May 6, 2019).

<sup>11</sup> The Oxford English Dictionary online, “fantasy, *n.* 3” (last accessed on May 6, 2019).

<sup>12</sup> Luke 1:51. Here the Vulgate has “mente” and the Greek original “dianoia,” each taking its negative tone from the context. The English Bible is quoted here and elsewhere in the King James Version of 1611.

<sup>13</sup> See Henry Vaughan’s translation of Heinrich Nolle’s *Hermetical Physic* (first published in 1613, expanded in 1619) in *The Works of Henry Vaughan*, ed. L. C. Martin, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1957), 547–90; here 574: “When the imagination is inflamed ... then strange passions and defections follow.” Like Paracelsus, Nolle took his major examples from the imagination exhibited by pregnant women. He was one of the first academics to be put on trial for espousing Rosicrucian ideas; see Gilly, *Cimelia Rhodostaurótica* (see note 4), 73 and 157.

<sup>14</sup> The Oxford English Dictionary online, “vision, *n.* 1” (accessed on Jul. 6, 2019).

<sup>15</sup> *AT*, 18. Vaughan also referred to the “Divine imagination” working through the vision of the legendary Hermes Trismegistus (*AT*, 11).

<sup>16</sup> *The Works of Thomas Vaughan*, ed. Waite (see note 3), v, xxviii, and *passim*.

<sup>17</sup> Aristotle, *De Anima*, bk. 3, chap. 3; quoted from “On the Soul,” trans. J. A. Smith, *The Complete Works of Aristotle: The Revised Oxford Edition*, ed. Jonathan Barnes, 2 vols. Bollingen



That is to say, imagination depends on sensations, images, and words stored in the memory. It is also subject to judgment and assists judgment in weighing different possibilities and predicting the best course of action for the will to pursue. This model continued into the Christian era. Augustine celebrated imagination as a power essential to faith. In his *Confessions*, he stated that he could not even predict the rising of the sun on the next day without using his imagination:

That which I look upon is present, that which I fore-signify is to come: not the sun, I mean, which already is; but the sunrising, which is not yet. And yet if I did not in my mind imagine [*animo imaginari*] the sunrising itself, (as I now do whilst I speak of it) never could I foretell it.<sup>18</sup>

Aquinas complicated the transition from memory to imagination, with intermediary phantasms, but reinforced the Aristotelian model for medieval scholasticism and university education well into the early modern period.<sup>19</sup>

Under the influence of Neoplatonism, especially as propounded by Marsilio Ficino,<sup>20</sup> new importance was placed on imagination. Cornelius Agrippa, writing on the occult philosophy, included a chapter on “the power of mans soul, in the mind, reason and imagination.” The chapter began: “Mans soul consisteth of mind, reason and imagination; the mind illuminates reason, reason floweth into the imagination.”<sup>21</sup> Agrippa’s word for imagination is *idolum*, a word that can have the negative connotation of phantasm, but here has the positive force of imagination as the well-informed translator recognizes.<sup>22</sup>

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Series 71.2 (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984), 1:641–92; here 680. See also the introduction to the present volume by Albrecht Classen.

**18** Augustine, *Confessions*, *Books IX–XIII*, trans. William Watts, ed. W. H. D. Rouse. Loeb Classical Library, 26–27 (London: Heinemann; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1911), 250–51; bk. 11, chap. 18.

**19** John F. Wipple, *The Metaphysical Thought of Thomas Aquinas: From Finite Being to Uncreated Being*. Monographs of the Society for Medieval and Renaissance Philosophy, 1 (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2000), 23–44.

**20** Marsilio Ficino, *De Triplici Vita* (Basel: Johannes Amerbach, 1497).

**21** Cornelius Agrippa, *Three Books of Occult Philosophy*, trans. J[ohn] F[rench] (London: Gregory Moule, 1651), 492; bk. 3, chap. 43. For a fine study of Agrippa’s treatment of the human soul and body, see Noel Putnik, “*Obtinere mentem divinam*: The Spiritual Anthropology of Cornelius Agrippa,” Ph. D. diss., Central European University, Budapest, 2017. On John French’s life and translations, see Thomas Willard, “Testing the Waters: Early Modern Studies,” *Bodily and Spiritual Hygiene in Medieval and Early Modern Literature: Exploration of Textual Presentations of Filth and Water*, ed. Albrecht Classen and Marilyn Sandidge. Fundamentals of Medieval and Early Modern Culture, 19 (Boston: Walter de Gruyter, 2017), 568–98; here 579–85.

**22** Henricus Cornelius Agrippa, *De Occulta Philosophia Libri III* (1533; Leyden: Godfrid and Marcellus Bering, 1650), 494; bk. 3, chap. 43.

Vaughan indeed refers to Agrippa's *idolum* as evidence that imagination is a high power of the soul. "In this *Idolum* is the seat of the Imagination, and it retains after Death an Impresse of those passions, and Affections [emotions] to which it was subject in the Body."<sup>23</sup>

Agrippa explains the tripartite division of the soul by saying that an idea becomes intellectual when "infused into the mind" and can then be understood; that it becomes rational when added to the reason and can then be considered as well; and that it becomes imaginable when "infused by the reason in the phantasie of the soul." Finally, says Agrippa, the idea becomes part of the soul's "Celestiall vehicle," which is to say of its aura: "the light is made manifestly visible to the eye" ("efficitur lux manifeste uisibilis ad oculum"). This last phrase is an important one for Vaughan because he quotes the Latin exactly (*AMA*, 11). Other esoteric writers before Vaughan had followed Agrippa's treatment of imagination as a power equivalent to reason and indeed superior to it.<sup>24</sup> Vaughan drew extensively on Agrippa for his first discourse, which included a portrait of him and a poem in lavish praise.<sup>25</sup>

Imagination became an issue for religious reformers of the sixteenth century. Calvinists wanted to avoid all "graven images," as did breakaway followers like the Puritans of England and New England, iconoclasts who are held responsible for breaking some prized examples of altarpieces and stained glass windows. Lutherans and others wanted to save images, especially those that came from God and his prophets. Schmidt-Biggemann identifies the Lutheran theologian Johann Arndt as a decisive contributor to the debate. In a small tract on iconography, first printed in 1597, Arndt argued that the images in the Old and New Testaments revealed archetypal ideas also found in nature:

Arndt's idea is that natural images are signs in the book of nature. These signs are conceived as hieroglyphs, as holy inscriptions. His text provides evidence for the connection between hieroglyphs and emblems. Nature itself delivers the hermeneutics of its secrets

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<sup>23</sup> Vaughan, *Anthroposophia Theomagica* (see note 2), 58. The suggestion here is that the imagination persists in the "Astral Man" after the reason has died with the body.

<sup>24</sup> Thomas Willard, "The Star in Man': C. G. Jung and Marie-Louise von Franz on the Alchemical Philosophy of Gerard Dorn," *Gutes Leben und Guter Tod von der Spätantike bis zur Gegenwart: Ein philosophisch-ethnischer Diskurs über die Jahrhunderte hinweg*, ed. Albrecht Classen. Theophrastus Paracelsus Studien, 4 (Berlin and Boston: Walter de Gruyter, 2012), 425–62; here 454–56. Paracelsus referred to imagination as "the star in man" because he considered it a direct link to the divine imagination that created the world.

<sup>25</sup> Vaughan, *Anthroposophia Theomagica* (see note 2), 51–54.

to those who are able to read with pious imagination. The signatures of created things can be deciphered by a believing imagination.<sup>26</sup>

As a consequence of developments in the pre-modern world, our discussion of fantasy and imagination, which derive from the Greek and Latin words for the same faculty, must presume some verbal, visual, and emotional experience on the part of those who imagine counter-worlds like those we shall consider. The same is true for those who read the literary treatments, or see or hear the pictorial or musical counterparts. However, while Schmidt-Biggemann's theory works well in approaching early modern texts like Vaughan's, it does not attempt to deal with contemporary developments in the philosophy of imagination. These are often quite contrary to those of Vaughan's era, placing far more emphasis on the material world than on the spiritual. For example, Mark Johnson has argued that imagination is rooted in bodily patterns of sensing the world and moving through it – as, he adds, are reason and meaning.<sup>27</sup>

Whereas the theories that Vaughan found in Agrippa may be called Platonic, modern philosophy tends toward the Aristotelian position that imagination creates images that aid reason in decision-making. Some philosophers take the position that imagination can work without images, while others have drawn from cognitive psychology to suggest that imagination cannot always draw from memory to produce new scenarios for rational review. Perhaps the great difference between the classical and contemporary views is the extended role of imagination in work with mental patients and autistic children or with artists and their creations.<sup>28</sup>

Of course, vision was not a mental faculty. It was God's revelation to man, and Vaughan thought with Paracelsus that it came through the imagination. God had imagined or imaged the creation before it was made, and his designs for creation could be understood by a pure imagination. Paracelsus therefore regarded imagination as a higher function than reason. Vaughan considered it the part of the human soul that persists after death, for "it retaines after Death

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26 Schmidt-Biggemann, *Philosophia perennis* (see note 5), 24–25. The "signatures" mentioned here refer to the doctrine of signatures professed by Paracelsus and Jakob Böhme, though with origins in herbal manuals of the Middle Ages and antiquity. Arndt was a long-time friend of Johann Valentin Andreae, principal author of the Rosicrucian manifestos.

27 Mark Johnson, *The Body in the Mind: The Bodily Basis of Meaning, Imagination and Reason* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987). Also see Edward G. Slingerland, *What Science Offers the Humanities: Integrating Body and Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 11–13.

28 See the extensive and well documented entry on imagination in the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/imagination/#Bib> (last accessed on Jul. 11, 2019). See also Allan J. Hamilton, *The Scalpel and the Soul: Encounters with Surgery, the Supernatural, and the Healing Powers of Hope* (New York: Putnam, 2008).

an Impresse of those passions, and Affections [emotions] to which it was subject in the Body.”<sup>29</sup>

## New Magical Light and the School of Magic

*Lumen de Lumine* took its title from the Nicene creed. The “light of light” was commonly understood to be Christ, and Vaughan’s title page quoted the parallel lines in Genesis and the Gospel according to John: “God said *Let there be Light*” and “The *Light* shineth in the *Darkness*.”<sup>30</sup> But he also took this light as part of a magical tradition that incorporated Christianity. He dedicated the book “*To my Deare mother, the most famous University of Oxford*” (A3r), which he saw as “*dispersed Body*” of learning, no longer what it had been (A4v). Vaughan was part of that diaspora: Jesus College, Oxford, where his first biographer said he became a fellow,<sup>31</sup> had been purged of members who did not recognize the authority of Parliament during a visitation of 1648 – members who still supported the embattled king. Biographers also confirm that Vaughan was ordained priest in the Church of England and was given the living of his home parish in Wales, but he left the area after heavy royalist losses there and would soon lose the income from the parish and the adjacent farmland. With his religious, political, and intellectual convictions in question, Vaughan may well have attempted the sort of imaginative history Schmitt-Biggemann and others have suggested. But did he?

We find a suggestive answer in a book he published a few months earlier. After his first book on the power of God in the creation, which he had called

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<sup>29</sup> Vaughan, *Anthroposophia Theomagica* (see note 2), 58. On Paracelsus and the power of imagination (*vis imaginative*), see Antoine Faivre, *Accès à l'ésotérisme occidental*, 2 vols. (Paris: Gallimard, 1996), vol. 2, 171–81. Also see Antoine Faivre, “The Imagination ... You mean fantasy, right?,” *Hermes Explains: Thirty Questions about Western Esotericism*, ed. Wouter J. Hanegraaff, Peter J. Forshaw, and Marco Pasi (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2019), 80–87.

<sup>30</sup> Genesis 1:3; John 1:5. Vaughan also quoted Pythagoras: “ne loquaris de Deo absque” (“talk not of God without light”). The phrase appears over the altar at which the alchemist prays in the first plate of Heinrich Khunrath, *Amphitheatrum Sapientiae Aeternae*, final edition (Hamburg: Guilielmus Antonius., 1609).

<sup>31</sup> Anthony Wood, “Thomas Vaughan,” *Athenae Oxonienses*, 2 vols. (London: Tho. Bennett, 1690–1691), 2:253–55; here 253. The best source of biographical information on Thomas Vaughan is F. E. Hutchinson, *Henry Vaughan: A Life and Interpretation* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1947); he notes that there is no record of Vaughan’s having become a fellow, but adds that records for the period are incomplete. Wood no doubt relied on first-hand information.

“theomagica,”<sup>32</sup> Vaughan wrote a history of magic “from *Adam* downwards,” concluding with his persona Eugenius Philalethes “as an *Usher* to the *Traine* [procession], and one born out of due time.”<sup>33</sup> He began by saying:

That I should professe *Magic* in this Discourse, and Justifie the Professors of it withal, is *Impietie* with many, but *Religion* with Mee. It is a *Conscience* I have learnt from *Authors* greater than my Self, and *Scriptures* greater than both. *Magic* is nothing els but the *Wisdom* of the *Creator* revealed and planted in the *Creature*.<sup>34</sup>

Following the lead of Agrippa and other apologists, Vaughan went on to note that “*Magicians* were the *first Attendants* our *Saviour* met withal in this world.”<sup>35</sup>

The light that conferred magical power to the natural philosopher was known as the *lumen naturae* (“light of nature”). Paracelsus called this the “*Licht des Menschen*” (“people’s light”), possibly with reference to words of Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount: “Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works, and glorify your father which is in heaven.”<sup>36</sup> The University of Oxford still has a coat of arms bearing the motto *Dominus illuminatio meus* (“the Lord is my light”)<sup>37</sup>; the University of Cambridge’s coat of arms also features light in its motto.<sup>38</sup> Both universities were founded in the high Middle Ages, but preserved the tradition of taking and indeed emanating light from both nature and God. In the seventeenth century, the Cambridge Platonist Benjamin Whichcote used the biblical statement “The spirit of man is the candle of the LORD” to support the principles of right reason and natural

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32 The title *Anthroposophia Theomagica* (see note 2) probably came from 1 Corinthians 2:4: “my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man’s wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power.”

33 Vaughan, *Magia Adamica* (see note 9), title page and 8.

34 Vaughan, *Magia Adamica* (see note 9), 1.

35 These were of course the “wise men” (Greek *magoi*, Latin *Magi*) of Matthew 2. See Henry Cornelius Agrippa, “To the Reader,” *Three Books of Occult Philosophy* (see note 21), A1r–A2r; here A1r. Vaughan’s “encomium” on the Agrippa and his most famous book, which precedes the translated text, is taken from AT, 53–54. Although the printed translation is dated 1651, a note by the contemporary bookseller George Thomason, in the British Library copy, states that he received it on November 24, 1650.

36 Matthew 5:16. See the prologue to Paracelsus, “*Liber de nymphis*,” *Paracelsus Werke*, ed. Will-Erich Peuckert, 5 vols. (Basel and Stuttgart: Schwabe, 1965–1969), vol. 3, 462–65; here 463. Also see Will-Erich Peuckert, *Pansophie*, part 1 “Ein Versuch zur Geschichte der weisen und schwarzen Magie,” 3rd ed. (1935; Berlin: Erich Schmidt Verlag, 1976), 191–96.

37 These are the opening words of the Vulgate Psalm 26 (King James Version Psalm 27).

38 *Hinc lumen et pocula sacra* (“From hence light and flowing ritual cups”).

law.<sup>39</sup> In all these and many similar claims, light came to people outwardly through nature and inwardly from God; however, even the sun, moon, and stars that light the natural world were said to take their light from God. Moreover, this light allowed Christian writers to draw upon pagan traditions on the ground that it was also available as part of a natural religion. To support this view, early modern writers drew on St. Paul's remark that "the invisible things of him [God] are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and godhead, so that they [the pagans] are without excuse."<sup>40</sup>

The light of nature is at the center of Thalia's map of the world through which she led Vaughan's dreamer (see Fig. 1). It lights up the world where a blindfolded seeker of truth is standing, while he is turned away from it toward the "Regio phantastica" ("Phantastic region" or "Region of fancy") where dangerous griffins threaten anyone looking for the "Mons Magorum Invisibilis" ("Invisible mountain of the magicians").<sup>41</sup> Vaughan understands magic as his favorite author Henricus Cornelius Agrippa defined it in his three books of occult philosophy, to be the hidden or occult sciences that could guide one in the three worlds of God's creation: alchemy in the natural world, astrology in the celestial world, and cabala – a Christianized version of Hebrew Kabbalah – in the supercelestial or angelical world.<sup>42</sup> It was usually called *magia naturalis* ("natural magic") or *philosophia naturalis* ("natural philosophy"). The term *scientia naturalis* ("natural science") was used less frequently in medieval and early modern times. In days when Aristotle was still the authority in university debates, students would proceed quickly from his physics to his metaphysics. The very structure of books on scientific matters like chemistry was basically deductive. Roger Bacon's well known *Speculum Alchemiae* ("Mirror of Alchemy") began with definitions and principles and then moved on to "accidents"

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<sup>39</sup> Proverbs 20:27; see Robert A. Greene, "Benjamin Whichcote, the Candle of the Lord, and Synderesis," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 52.3 (Oct.–Dec. 1991): 617–44.

<sup>40</sup> Romans 1:20; see D. P. Walker, *The Ancient Theology: Studies in Christian Platonism from the Fifteenth to the Eighteenth Century* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1972).

<sup>41</sup> The related concepts of hybridity and monstrosity are treated in many contributions to this volume. Vaughan's griffins cover land and air and suggest the dangers of travel, they also suggest dangers of predatory humans at the top of the food chain. On hybridity, see especially the essay of Albrecht Classen in this volume.

<sup>42</sup> Agrippa, *Three Books of Occult Philosophy* (see note 21). For a well annotated edition, see Heinrich Cornelius Agrippa of Nettesheim, *De Occulta Philosophia Libri Tres*, ed. V. Perrone Campagni. *Studies in the History of Christian Thought*, 48 (Leiden and New York: E. J. Brill, 1991).

(i.e., accidentals).<sup>43</sup> One of Vaughan's favorite books of alchemy, the *Testamentum* falsely ascribed to Ramon Lull – no doubt because relying heavily on his mnemonics – had two parts, labelled *Theorica* and *Practica* (“theoretical” and “practical”).<sup>44</sup> When Vaughan wrote about alchemical matters, he spent most of his effort on the theory and certainly wrote best on this part of the subject. Though he is often called a “spiritual alchemist,”<sup>45</sup> he might better be termed a “theoretical alchemist,” which is to say, a writer who helps readers imagine the work of alchemy.

Concerning the light of nature, Vaughan writes:

This is the *secret Candle of God*, which hee hath *tinn'd* [covered] in the *Elements*, it *burns* and is not *seen*, for it *shines* in a *dark place*. Every natural *Body* is a kind of *Black Lanthorne* [covered lantern], it carries this *Candle* within it, but the *Light* appears not, it is *Ecclips'd* with the *Grossnesse* of the *matter*. The *Effects* of this *Light* are apparent in all things, but the *Light* it self is *denyed*, or *else not followed*. (LL, 41)

This light is life itself, rather like the *élan vitale* of Bergson.<sup>46</sup> For Vaughan, it corresponds to the sun in the “*great world*” or macrocosm and to the “*continuall coction ... or Boyling*” in the human body or microcosm (LL, 41–42); and just as Bergson's vital force is responsible for evolution, Vaughan's inner light is the agent of transmutation, both in humans and in the things of nature.

The magical school of Thalia's map is, first of all, the school of nature. “As for the *Mysteries of my Schoole*,” she tells Eugenius, “*thou hast the Libertie to peruse them all, there is not any thing here, but I will gladly reveale it to thee*” (14). It is not free from deceptions, he later explains as he reflects on her map. “It is true,” he writes, “that no man enters the *Magickall Schoole* but he *wanders first* in this *Region* of Chimera's” (40) – the “*Regio phantastica*” on the map. We have still to identify the third figure in this central vignette, between the upper vignette of the mountain at the bottom one with the child. The winged figure to

<sup>43</sup> Roger Bacon, “*Speculum Alchemiae*,” *Theatrum Chemicum*, 2nd ed., 6 vols. (Strassburg: Zetzner, 1659–1661), 2:377–85; here 378–79, chaps. 1–2. For an English translation see, *The Mirror of Alchimy, Composed by the Thrice-Learned and Famous Fryer Francis Bachon*, ed. Stanton J. Linden. English Renaissance Hermeticism (New York and London: Garland Publishing, 1992).

<sup>44</sup> Raimundus Lullius (attrib.), “*Testamentum*,” *Theatrum Chemicum* (see note 43), 4:1–170. The “*Practica*” covers 135–70 and begins by stating that the theory is more important for beginners.

<sup>45</sup> See Donald R. Dickson, “Introduction,” *Thomas and Rebecca Vaughan's AQUA VITAE: NON VITIS* (British Library MS. Sloane 1741), ed. id. Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies, 247 (Tempe, AZ: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2001), ix–liii; here xxxi–xxxix.

<sup>46</sup> Henri Bergson, *L'Évolution créatrice* (Paris: Alcan, 1911).

the reader's left of the candle holds a sword in its right hand and a string in its left hand. It is later identified as the "Guide" one needs to find the mountain of the magicians, which is said to be invisible (36). Vaughan also calls it "the *Angel* or *Genius* of the *place*. In *one hand* he bears a *sword*, to keep off the *Contentious* and *unworthy*: in the *other* a *Clew* [ball] of *Thread* to *lead* in the *Humble*, and *Harmlesse*" (43).

The map or "Emblematical Type" of Thalia's "Sanctuarie" and school was produced for publication as an engraving by Robert Vaughan, whose name appears in the lower right-hand corner (14). Almost nothing is known of this Vaughan, who may have been a relative; he also engraved the title page for a book of poems by Vaughan's twin brother, registered a few days after *Lumen de Lumine*. He is regarded as one of the best portrait engravers of the early seventeenth century, and produced the engravings for the *Theatrum Chemicum Britannicum* (1652).<sup>47</sup> The volume's wealthy editor, Elias Ashmole, kept the records of his instructions to the engraver, which show that Robert Vaughan was used to taking directions and being given older drawings as guides – all of which leads one to assume that Vaughan gave instructions for the map of Thalia's school.

One possible source is an engraving of the alchemical "conjunction" prepared by the Paracelsian physician Stephan Michelspacher during the rush of Rosicrucian publications in the second decade of the seventeenth century (Fig. 2). An early attempt to demonstrate the combination of magical arts favored by Agrippa and other predecessors of the newly announced Rosicrucian fraternity, the book featured an allegorical representation of the alchemical wedding or conjunction in the third of its four full-page engravings.<sup>48</sup> The work takes place in an explicitly alchemical mountain on which the deities representing the seven metals stand, with Mercury at the top; inside of which the royal couple sit; and up to which steps have been carved in the rock and labeled with names traditionally given to the seven stages of the alchemical work. In the foreground there are two human figures, one blindfolded and extending his arms in the universal sign of

<sup>47</sup> "Robert Vaughan (circa 1600–circa 1660), Artist," National Portrait Gallery, [www.npg.org](http://www.npg.org) (last accessed on May 10, 2019). Also see Hutchinson, *Henry Vaughan* (see note 31), 241.

<sup>48</sup> Stephan Michelspacher, *Cabala, Kunst und Natur: in Alchymia* (Augsburg: Hans Schultes, 1615), unpaginated. The Latin edition, *Speculum Artis et Naturae, in Alchymia* (Augsburg: Johannes Weh, 1616), included a title-page gesture "to the Fraternity of the Rosy Cross" ("Roseae Crucis Fraternitati"), the existence of which was first announced in print in 1614. See Stanislaus Klossowski de Rola, *The Golden Game: Alchemical Engravings of the Seventeenth Century* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1998), 52–58.



bewilderment, the other following nature as he hastens after a rabbit headed into a hole under the mountain.<sup>49</sup>

Here we might pause to address the question of the blindfold. Was it not a common feature of initiations into secret societies? Doesn't Tamino wear a blindfold when he enters the pseudo-Masonic temple in Mozart's *Magic Flute* (1791)?<sup>50</sup> This seems to be an eighteenth-century development.<sup>51</sup> There were Masonic groups in England and Scotland in the seventeenth century; Elias Ashmole was initiated into one in 1646, and Vaughan's patron, Sir Robert Moray, into another in 1641. However, the earliest known instructions for the ceremony of initiation make no mention of a blindfold. Instead, the candidate is first to be "frighted with 1000 ridiculous postures and grimaces" and then to enter the assembled company making "a ridiculous bow" and a sign he has been shown.<sup>52</sup> As I read the two engravings, the earlier one of the conjunction seems to suggest that the seven steps of the alchemical work are not the path to be taken, rather the steps following nature into the underworld. The later one of the school of magic suggests meanwhile that the magic mountain cannot be seen with the naked eye because it is invisible.

The bottom vignette, inside the circle formed by an ouroboros or winged serpent biting its tail, seems to be original with Vaughan. The Latin words above the vignette, "Thesaurus Incantatus" ("Unsung treasure") indicate that it contains the riches of Thalia's "*mineral Region*" (18). The words within the circle, "Non nisi parvulis" ("Only as little ones") encapsulate a saying of Jesus: "Except ye be converted and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven."<sup>53</sup> In a subsequent commentary, Vaughan remarks that the winged serpent is "the *Green Dragon*, or the *Magicians Mercury*, involving in it self a *Treasure of Gold and Pearl*" (43); that the string or "River of Pearl" is "the *stone of the Philosophers*" (68); and that the child sitting on the pearls represents the sort of person who will be admitted to the treasury of the earth:

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49 The iconography here has been discussed in *Divine Wisdom, Divine Nature: The Message of the Rosicrucian Manifestos in the Visual Language of the Seventeenth Century*, ed. José Bauman and Cis van Heertum (Amsterdam: Bibliotheca Philosophica Hermetica, 2014), 122.

50 See M. F. M. van der Berk, *The Magic Flute / Die Zauberflöte: An Alchemical Allegory* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2004).

51 Because the candidate for initiation is said to undergo a trial, the contribution of Michael Fulton to this volume has suggestions for the role of a strong imagination in keeping one's sanity.

52 David Stevenson, *The Origins of Freemasonry: The Scottish Century, 1590–1710* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 153. Stevenson devotes an entire chapter to Moray (166–89).

53 Matthew 18:3; the Vulgate text reads: "nisi conversi fueritis, et efficiamini parvuli, non intrabitis in regnum caelorum."

“*Innocent*, and very *Humble*: not impudent proud *Raunters*, nor Covetous un-charitable *Misers*” (43).<sup>54</sup>

Before we can think of Michelspacher’s engraving as a source for Vaughan’s engraver, we must ask how a solitary reader in London – no longer connected to Oxford’s Bodleian Library, which he celebrated in a poem prefixed to *Lumen de Lumine* (B1r–v) – could have seen a book printed decades earlier in a foreign country. It seems likely that Vaughan had access to the finest library of Rosicrucian materials in England: the library amassed over several decades by the late Dr. Robert Fludd (1574–1637). Fludd had written one of the first defenses of the Rosicrucian movement,<sup>55</sup> and his nephew and godson Lewin Fludd, who was also a trained physician, took possession of his books. Vaughan’s Anglo-American friend Robert Child visited the library and borrowed books that he may have shared with others.<sup>56</sup> He may have also borrowed manuscripts, including the English translation of the Rosicrucian manifestos for which Vaughan was persuaded to prepare an introduction.<sup>57</sup>

The first detailed study of Michelspacher’s book emphasizes its concern with “the Tincture of the Alchemists,” a transformative substance promoted in Paracelsian medicine.<sup>58</sup> Vaughan referred to the “Tincture” nine times in *Lumen de Lumine* and five times in the preface to the translated Rosicrucian manifestos.

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<sup>54</sup> Vaughan distances himself from political and religious radicals like the Ranters, who maintained that Hell was an empty stomach and Heaven a full one, and who sometimes spoke of alchemy as God’s plan for the chosen; see *A Collection of Ranter Writings: Spiritual Liberty and Sexual Freedom in the English Revolution*, ed. Nigel Smith (1983; London: Pluto Press, 2014).

<sup>55</sup> Robert Fludd (writing as R. de Fluctibus), *Tractatus Apologeticus Integritatem Societas de Rosea Crucis defendens* (Leiden: Gottfried Basson, 1617). For an excellent study of this prolific author, see Joscelyn Godwin, *The Greater and Lesser Worlds of Robert Fludd: Macrocosm, Microcosm, and Medicine* (Rochester, VT: Inner Traditions, 2019).

<sup>56</sup> See the reference to Fludd’s library in the diary or “Ephemerides” of Samuel Hartlib, now in the University of Sheffield Library. In conversation with Dr. Robert Child in 1650, Hartlib learned that Child had made an “inventory of the library” (“Ephemerides,” 1650, 28/1/73A–B). Vaughan seems to have been present at the conversation, and Hartlib’s next diary entry is that recorded that he “is writing a treatise called *Philosophia Adamica*,” the *Magia Adamica* registered with the Stationers’ Company on October 2, 1650. Elias Ashmole accompanied Child on at least one visit to the library in Maidstone; see his diaries, edited by C. H. Josten. Another possible source was the library of Vaughan’s friend Thomas Henshaw, which Child considered the second best collection of chemical books in England (“Ephemerides,” 1650, 28/1/73B).

<sup>57</sup> See Thomas Willard, “*De furore Britannico*: The Rosicrucian Manifestos in Britain,” *Aries: Journal for the Study of Western Esotericism* 14 (2014): 32–61; here 38–48.

<sup>58</sup> Alinda van Ackoooy, “Through the Alchemical Looking Glass: An Interpretation of Stephan Michelspacher’s *Cabala, Spiegel der Kunst und Natur*, in *Alchymia*,” M.A. thesis, Amsterdam, 2016, 4.

In a late discourse, published several years after the English manifestos, he wrote: "It is the advice of the Brothers of R: C: that those who would be Proficient in this *Art* [alchemy], should study the *elements* and their *operations* before they seek after the *Tinctures of Metals*."<sup>59</sup> It seems no big surprise that Vaughan would choose for his first commentary on the dream vision and its map a Rosicrucian document that discusses the tincture that the guide would give to the successful initiate.<sup>60</sup> The first Rosicrucian manifesto made explicit reference to Paracelsus, and the medical ideas in subsequent Rosicrucian writings are implicitly Paracelsian, when not explicitly so. In the *Archidoxes* or "principal teachings" that Paracelsus distributed to his followers, he called the tincture an arcanum, or secret, that "induces health." He added, "The tincture *tinges* the good and the evil, the dense and the subtle. None, otherwise, does this perfect its operations on the body so as to transmute corrupt and ill-disposed complexions into sound ones, just like that tincture which makes Luna [silver] out of Mercury."<sup>61</sup> This is the end of Paracelsian medicine: to improve human bodies as alchemy improved metallic ones.

## The Rosicrucian Letter and Its Source

No sooner did Vaughan's narrator awake from his dream tour of "the invisible *Guiana*" with its "mountains of the Moone" than he thought of a document from his eclectic reading (7, 24).<sup>62</sup> "The Access and Pilgrimage to this place, with the Difficulties which attend them, are faithfully, and magisterially described by the *Brothers of R. C.*" (25). He then offered a Latin text which he

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<sup>59</sup> Eugenius Philalethes (Thomas Vaughan), *Euphrates, or the Waters of the East* (London: Humphrey Moseley, 1655), 58.

<sup>60</sup> On alchemical and literary treatments of the tincture, see Lyndy Abraham, *A Dictionary of Alchemical Imagery* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 200. For the Paracelsian take on tinctures in the prolongation of life, see Thomas Willard, "Living the Long Life: Physical and Spiritual Health in Two Early Paracelsian Texts," *Religion und Gesundheit: Der heilkundliche Diskurs im 16. Jahrhundert*, ed. Albrecht Classen. Theophrastus Paracelsus Studien, 3 (Berlin and Boston: Walter de Gruyter, 2011), 347–80.

<sup>61</sup> *The Hermetic and Alchemical Writings of Paracelsus*, ed. Arthur Edward Waite, 2 vols. (London: James Elliott, 1894), vol. 2, 45–46; *Archidoxes*, bk. 5.

<sup>62</sup> "Guiana" (modern day Guyana) was the fabulous land of gold discussed in Walter Raleigh, *The Discoverie of the Large, Rich, and Beutiful empire of Gviana with a relation of the great and Golden Citie of Manoa (which the spanyards call El Dorado)* (London: Robert Robinson, 1596). The Mountains of the Moon were the Atlas Mountains of Africa, regarded as the source of the Nile until the nineteenth century.

called “A Letter *from the Brothers of R. C. Concerning the Invisible, Magicall Mountaine, And the Treasure therein Contained*” (26). He considered it sufficiently important that, he wrote, “I shall for the satisfaction of the *ordinarie Reader*, put it into *English*” (32).

The letter starts with the statement that everyone has a natural desire for riches that would make one feel such “dominion” over things as God intended for man in the creation story (Genesis 1:26). Although people wish for rewards without the requisite work, the world has reached the last age (“ultimo saeculo”) when all shall be revealed to the worthy (Matthew 10:26). They must, however, make the arduous and dangerous journey to a certain mountain guarded by the devil. They must travel there on a long dark night, presumably in the spirit rather than the body, and must find a guide (Latin “conductor”) to lead and protect them – indeed, to find them first of all and take them to the mountain’s location “*in the Midst of the Earth, or Center of the world which is both small and Great,*” which is to say, at the heart of the individual seeker as well as the physical creation as understood in the geocentric cosmology (35). Then at sunrise, the “*great Treasure*” will be visible: “*The Chieftest thing in it, and the most perfect, is a certain exalted Tincture with which the world (if it served God and were worthy of such Gifts) might be tinged and turn’d into most pure Gold*” (37). But first the tincture will serve to rejuvenate the seeker:

*This Tincture being used, as your Guide shall teach you, will make you young when you are old, and you shall perceive no Disease in any part of your Bodies. By means of this Tincture also, you shall find pearls of that Excellency, which cannot be imagined.* (37)

However, the tincture must not be abused, or else it will be lost irrecoverably.<sup>63</sup>

Vaughan’s first modern editor, Arthur Edward Waite, cited a letter that Robert Fludd traced back to one addressed to a candidate in Danzig (modern-day Gdańsk). Pious in tone, the letter opened with a paraphrase of biblical texts: “*Ascendamus ad montem rationabilum, & aedificemus domum Sapientiae*” (“let us ascend the mountain of reason and build the house of Wisdom”).<sup>64</sup>

<sup>63</sup> Dr. Georgiana Hedesan has drawn my attention to a similar allegory about the search for the tincture to be found in a mountain written by the otherwise unknown Xamolxidis and presented as a colloquy of gods representing various metals: “*Tractatus aureus doctissimi philosophi Xamolxidis, Quem Dyrrachium Philosophicum vocavit,*” published in Benedictus Figulus, ed., *Thesaurinella Olympica aurea tripartita. Das ist: Ein himmlisch güldnes Schatzkammerlein* (Frankfurt a. M.: Nicolai Stein, [1608]), 73–85.

<sup>64</sup> Joachim Fritzius (attrib. to Robert Fludd), *Summum Bonum* (n.p.: n.p., 1629), 40. Biblical echoes here are of Psalm 122:1 (labeled “a song of ascents”) and Genesis 11:4; they suggest that the Rosicrucian house of Wisdom reverses the losses of Babel while replacing the destroyed temple in Jerusalem.

Waite found an English version, “quaintly translated in a manuscript of the seventeenth century.”<sup>65</sup> The aspirant was urged:

Enter, enter into ye glory of God and thy own salvation, ye gates and Schoole of Philosophicall Love, in which is taught everlasting charity and fraternall love, and that some resplendent and invisible castle which is built upon the mountaine of ye Lord, out of whose roote goeth forth a fountaine of livinge waters, and a river of love! Drinke, drinke, and againe drinke, that thou mayest see all hidden things, and converse with us.<sup>66</sup>

Waite considered this document “much inferior” to Vaughan’s; however, he noted that little early Rosicrucian literature was available in English libraries, and he did not read German himself.<sup>67</sup> Some years later, Alan Rudrum found a variant Latin translation of what he assumed was the original German text.<sup>68</sup> However, it seems possible that an original Latin translation reached Vaughan in a manuscript or printed book. For one of the two German versions first printed in 1617 had a title-page note informing readers that it was “first written in the Latin language, but then translated into German” (“Erstlich in Lateinisch Sprach beschrieben ... Jetzo aber verdeutscht”).<sup>69</sup> The translator and supposed author was a German physician named Georg Molther,<sup>70</sup> and what little we know about him suggests a strong association with the culture from which the Rosicrucian materials first appeared.

A native of Grünberg in Hesse, Georg Molther (1588–1660) attended medical classes at the University of Marburg an der Lahn, also in Hesse, from 1608 or

<sup>65</sup> Arthur Edward Waite, *The Real History of the Rosicrucians* (London: G. Redway, 1887), 296. On Fludd’s relation to Fritz and Rosicrucian issues, see Thomas Willard, “Robert Fludd,” in *Great Lives from History: The 17th Century*, ed. Larissa Juliet Taylor, 2nd ed. (Pasadena, CA: Salem Press, 2005), online at: [http://ezproxy.library.arizona.edu/login?url=https://search.credoreference.com/content/entry/salemgilsev/robert\\_fludd/0?institutionId=6437](http://ezproxy.library.arizona.edu/login?url=https://search.credoreference.com/content/entry/salemgilsev/robert_fludd/0?institutionId=6437) (last accessed on Aug. 26, 2019).

<sup>66</sup> Waite, *The Real History of the Rosicrucians* (see note 65), 298–99.

<sup>67</sup> *The Works of Thomas Vaughan*, ed. Waite (see note 3), 259, note 1.

<sup>68</sup> *The Works of Thomas Vaughan*, ed. Rudrum (see note 3), 679.

<sup>69</sup> Antwort, / Der Hochwürdige und Hoher- / leuchten Brüderschafft deß Rosen- / Creutzes auff etzlicher an sie e- / rgangene schreiben (n.p.: n.p., 1617). I have consulted the copy held in the Ritman Library, Amsterdam. It may be the fourth manifesto that one Rosicrucian scholar reported seeing at the end of a 1617 reprinting of the earlier manifestos. See F. N. Pryce, *The Fame and Confession of the Fraternity of R: C: Commonly of the Rosie Cross* (Margate: S.R.I.A. [Societas Rosicruciana in Anglia], 1923), 1–56; here 25.

<sup>70</sup> The identification was first made in Carlos Gilly, *Rhodostaurótica Cimelia* (see note 4), 99, based on known work by Molther.

1609 until 1613, when he received his medical degree.<sup>71</sup> He was a classmate of the alchemist Johann Daniel Mylius, with whom he participated in public disputations in 1614. He became the city physician of the Hessian town of Wetzlar in 1616. The duke or Graf of Hesse – Moritz, who was called “the learned” – was the son of the university’s founder, and he made a point of finding professors of medicine who followed the teachings of Paracelsus. Moritz took an early interest in the Rosicrucian writings, and the first manifesto was printed by his court printer in Kassel, four years after the first printed reply to the circulating manuscript.<sup>72</sup>

The town of Wetzlar is situated some sixty kilometers northwest of Frankfurt, which gave the young physician ready access to the famous book market there. In a pamphlet dated 1615 and prepared in time for the 1616 market, Molther told of a man who called himself a Rosicrucian when he passed through the town. Molther was sufficiently intrigued to seek him out and wrote that he found the man “knowledgable about all the secrets of nature” (“omnia Naturae consiliorum poterat videri particeps”).<sup>73</sup> He subsequently published a report on the message given to aspiring candidates by this supposed Rosicrucian, identified only as E. D. F. O. C. R. – i.e., E. D. Frater Ordinis Crucae Roseae or E. D. Brother of the Order of the Christian Red Cross.<sup>74</sup> Modern scholars tend to dismiss the work as a literary hoax, noting that no real brother would reveal his identity under the rule of secrecy announced in the first manifesto; thus anyone professing to be a brother would be an obvious fraud. However, the early commentator Michael Maier, who

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71 Fritz Krafft, “The Magic Word Chymiatra – and the Attractiveness of Medical Education at Marburg, 1608–1620,” *History of Universities* 26.1 (2012): 1–116; here 30, 47.

72 Yates, *The Rosicrucian Enlightenment* (see note 4), 27, 54; also see Bruce T. Moran, *The Alchemical World of the German Court: Occult Philosophy and Medicine in the Circle of Moritz of Hessen, 1572–1632*. Sudhoffs Archiv, Beiheft, 29 (Stuttgart: Steiner, 1991). Gilly suggests that the Paracelsian physician Johann Hartmann, who joined the medical faculty at Marburg a. d. L., was in a position to bring a manuscript of the *Fama Fraternitatis* with him; Gilly, *Cimelia Rhodostauritica* (see note 4), 29.

73 Georg Molther, *De quodam Peregrino, Qui anno superiore M.DC.XV. Imperialem Wetzflariam transiens non modo se Fratrem R.C. Confessus Fuit* (Frankfurt a. M.: Johann Bringer for Johann Berner, 1616), 6. The cited quotation appears with useful commentary in Vera Keller, *Knowledge and the Public Interest, 1575–1725* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 82. The copy in the British Library contains a separate petition to the Rosicrucian brotherhood signed by one Hermannus Bildtz.

74 *Gründlicher Bericht / Von dem vorhaben / Gelegenheit und inhalt der löblichen Bruderschaft deß Rosen Creutzes / Gestellt durch einem unernannten, aber doch Führnehmen derselbigen Bruderschaft Mitgenossen* (Frankfurt a. M.: Johann Bringer, 1617). The British Library copy of this text has the handwritten initials E.D.F.O.C.R. on the title page. This seems to be identical with Molther’s *Antwort* (see note 69).

wrote a book on the rules of the order, took the story as a true one, presumably because he believed that the years of imposed secrecy had ended with the publication of the first manifesto. He included news from Wetzlar in his major account of the fraternity.<sup>75</sup>

Molther's small book, which runs to only thirteen printed pages, contains almost the whole of Vaughan's letter; only the last three pages are omitted from *Lumen de Lumine*. The English translation has been reprinted, sometimes as Vaughan's original composition<sup>76</sup> and usually with deep regard for the message. One author likens Vaughan's letter to "that type of teaching and inspiration that occurs to us in dreams."<sup>77</sup> The commentator thus brings the discussion back to the theories of faculty psychology that dominated thought about "moral philosophy" into the modern age – theories that attributed dreams to the more or less fanciful workings of the imagination in rearranging perceived images stored in the memory. From here, there is but a short step to modern psychology and discussions of the collective conscious.

## The Alchemical Imagination in Depth Psychology

Vaughan's first borrowing from Rosicrucian sources occurred in a small discourse printed at the same time as his first discourse and bound with it. *Anthroposophia Theomagica* included a Latin dedication to the Rosicrucian fraternity (A2r–v). In the companion tract on "The Hidden Magical Soul," Vaughan quoted at length from the Paracelsian translator and writer Gerard Dorn: "*This is He to whom the Brothers of R. C. gave the title of Sapiens [the wise man] and from whose Writings they borrowed most of their Instructions ad Candidatum quaedam Germaniae [to a certain German candidate]*" (AMA, 37). These instructions appear in a dialogue involving the body, soul, and spirit as they go, much against the body's wishes, on a journey to a fortress [Latin *castrum*] where all

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<sup>75</sup> Michael Maier, *Themis Aurea: The Laws of the Fraternitie of the Rosie Cross* (London: N. Brooke, 1656), 86; chap. 12. The original text was printed in Frankfurt a. M., for Lucas Jennis, in 1618. For a full discussion, see J. B. Craven, *Count Michael Maier: Doctor of Philosophy and Medicine, Alchemist, Rosicrucian, Mystic: 1568–1622* (Kirkwall, Orkney, UK: W. Peace, 1910), 98–104, esp. 101.

<sup>76</sup> A *Christian Rosenkreutz Anthology*, ed. Paul M. Allen (Blauvelt, NY: Rudolf Steiner Publications, 1968), 393–94.

<sup>77</sup> See, e.g., Jeffrey Mishlove, *Roots of Consciousness: The Classic Encyclopedia of Consciousness Studies* (1978; Tulsa, OK: Council Oak Books, 1993), 50–52; here 50.

knowledge is to be found.<sup>78</sup> A favorite line for many readers, including Vaughan and Jung, is one in which Truth speaks: “Transmutemini (inquit) transmutemini de Lapidis mortuis in Lapides vivos philosophicos” (“Transmute, she said, transmute yourselves from stones into living philosophical stones”).<sup>79</sup> Jung borrowed the term “Unus Mundus” from Dorn to describe the unitary conscious of the fully integrated “Self.”<sup>80</sup> In Jung’s unified vision of the psyche, one mental faculty does not dominate over another and no mental activity inhibits others as may happen in such Freudian processes as repression and sublimation. Instead, the knower is not cut off from the known, but rather is part of it.<sup>81</sup> This corresponds to the God’s-eye view that a minister trained in Vaughan’s day would associate with the anagogic level of biblical interpretation.

As Dante explains it, the four levels of biblical interpretation as practiced in the late Middle Ages did not contradict one another but supplemented them. On the literal level, Egypt was a place on a map; while on the allegorical level, it was a place of bondage from which the Christian must pray for release. On the moral or tropological level, it was sin itself; and on the anagogical level, it was all of these at once: the human condition from the fall of Adam and Eve to the forgiveness of sin, the atonement by Christ, and the salvation of righteous souls at the

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**78** Gerard Dorn, “De Speculativa Philosophia Gradus Septem,” *Theatrum Chemicum* (see note 43), 1:218–76. For a good biography of Dorn, see Didier Kahn: “Les débuts de Gérard Dorn d’après le manuscrit autographe de sa *Clavis totius Philosophiae Chymisticae* (1565),” *Analecta Paracelsica: Studien zum Nachleben Theophrastus von Hohenheims im deutschen Kulturgebiet der frühen Neuzeit*, ed. Joachim Telle. Heidelberger Studien zur Naturkunde der frühen Neuzeit, 4 (Stuttgart: Steiner, 1994), 59–126.

**79** Dorn, “Speculativa Philosophia” (see note 78), 1:259. Quoted, e.g., in C. G. Jung, *Psychology and Alchemy*, trans. R. F. C. Hull, 2nd ed. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1968), 148. The quotation alludes to the “lively stones” of 1 Peter 2:5, “built up into a spiritual house, a holy priesthood.” Also quoted in *AMA*, 35.

**80** C. G. Jung, *Mysterium Coniunctionis: An Inquiry into the Separation and Synthesis of Psychic Opposites in Alchemy*, trans. R. F. C. Hull, 2nd ed. Collected Works of C. G. Jung, 14 (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1970), 462–65. See Thomas Willard, “The Star in Man: C. G. Jung and M.-L. von Franz on the Alchemical Philosophy of Gerard Dorn” (see note 24), 431. Dorn used this term for the world as it was after the week of creation in “Physica Genesis,” *Theatrum Chemicum* (see note 43), 1:331–63; here 335–40. Also see Marie-Louise von Franz, *Alchemical Active Imagination* (Dallas, TX: Spring Books, 1979), which applies the dialogic approach of Dorn’s allegory to the use of imagination in Jungian psychology, which she considered the most useful tool in the therapist’s toolbox.

**81** Behind this thought is the biblical text of 1 Corinthians 13:12: “For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known.”



Last Judgment.<sup>82</sup> On the anagogical level, it was everything seen from the eternal perspective of God. Applying the same four-level interpretation to Vaughan's "magicall Mountaine," we find the mountain as a literal object, on which the Rosicrucians were said to have built their House of the Holy Spirit, then as an allegorical representation of the initiate's goal. On the higher moral level, it becomes the challenge to the seeker who must live a righteous life before being granted admission; while on the anagogical level, it becomes the whole process of living a pious life, with the hoped-for rewards.

Because Vaughan assumes that the religious seeker who reads his book will be looking for material treasure on earth, made possible through alchemy, as well as treasure in heaven, his account of evolving consciousness finds an echo in the words of a medieval monk in Japan. D. T. Suzuki, a scholar of Zen Buddhism, liked to quote a ninth-century monk who "declared that there were three stages in his understanding of the dharma [the principle of cosmic order]: the first stage seeing mountain as mountain and water as water; the second stage seeing mountain as not mountain and water as not water; and the third stage seeing mountain as still mountain and water as still water."<sup>83</sup> There is a fourth stage as well, the anagogical vision available to the person who can grasp the different stages simultaneously. The fourth stage is implied in the image of the ouroboros, which represents both reunification of the body and mind, according to Jungian analysts,<sup>84</sup> and a step outside of time to the god's-eye perspective of eternity.

## The Other Mysteries

After translating the letter, Vaughan continues his commentary on the *map* or "Magicall Emblem" that Thalia gave the dreamer. With commentary on the upper vignette of the mountain behind him – for Thalia has identified the Mountains of the Moon as the source of mercurial waters – he turns to the central vignette with the blindfolded man about to enter the realm of fantasy. He makes it clear that this man differs significantly from the possible model in Michelspacher's emblem. He is not contrasted with the man who follows nature

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<sup>82</sup> Dante, *The Banquet*, ed. and trans. Christopher Ryan. Stanford French and Italian Studies, 69 (Saratoga, CA: ANMA Libri, 1989), 42–44; id., *Convivio*, bk.2, chap. 1.

<sup>83</sup> Daisetz Taitaro Suzuki, *Essays in Zen Buddhism (First Series)* (London: Rider, 1949), 25. Suzuki identifies the monk as Qingyuan Weixan.

<sup>84</sup> Richard and Iona Miller, *The Modern Alchemist: A Guide to Personal Transformation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Phanes Press, 1994), 76–77.

in the form of a rabbit. Instead, he is representative of all men. "It is true," Vaughan writes, "that no man enters the *Magicall Schoole* but [unless] hee wanders first in this *Region of Chimaera's*, for the *Inquiries* we make before we attain to *Experimentall Truths*, are most of them *erroneous*" (40). The "*Fantastick Region*" is the source of all error, "the true Originall *Seminarie* [seed bed] of all *Sects* and their *Dissentions*" (39). There is no avoiding it unless one finds the "*Angel or Genius of the place*" (41), who carries a sword to repel the unworthy and a string to lead the humble seeker after truth.<sup>85</sup>

Vaughan identifies the light of nature at the center of the middle vignette with the candle of God.<sup>86</sup> Thus it belongs on an altar, as shown in the engraving. It burns brightly in a dark place, as the whole of the central vignette should be understood. It corresponds to the sun in the physical world, and it resembles the light inside each living thing, though obscured by matter. Underneath the altar is the ouroboros or, as Vaughan specifies, the true mercury of alchemists, along with a treasure of pearl and gold (43). This treasure is not strictly symbolic, Vaughan assures the reader; it is "neither *Dreame* nor *Fansie* but a known, *Demonstrable, practicall Truth*."

His survey of the symbolic "counter-world" completed, Vaughan moves on to the "other *Mysteries*" Thalia taught him underground. He does so in what seems their "Naturall Harmonicall Order" (44). He starts with the first matter or *prima materia* and moves on through the stages of the alchemical work to what he calls "The *Regeneration, Ascent, and Glorification*" (92). This is followed by the projection of the ultimate matter or philosophers' stone onto everyday matter, which he calls "The *Descent, and Metempsychosis*" (94). The discussion in these eleven sections takes up more than half the book, but our focus remains the engraved image and what it says about the progression from sense perception to fantasy, imagination and vision. It seems that significant sense perceptions are stored in memory, to be sorted by reason and judgment, while the less ordinary ones are stored with the imagination and fantasy from which dreams are made. Vision occurs on a higher plane than that of reason, judgment, and memory, in what Vaughan terms "the *Fire-world*" where one "sees what is both *Invisible* and *Incredible* to the common *Man*" (LL, 88). The entrance to this world is through what Paracelsus calls the Aquaster ("star water"), which Jung identified with the unconscious.<sup>87</sup> The imagination then takes on a double quality: passive daydreaming and what Jung

<sup>85</sup> The flaming sword is associated with the cherub guarding the entrance to Eden (Genesis 3:24 and Ezekiel 28:17), while the string is associated with Ariadne in the Minotaur's labyrinth (Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 8.152–82).

<sup>86</sup> Proverbs 20:27.

<sup>87</sup> Willard, "Living the Long Life" (see note 60), 373.

called “active imagination,” which is very close to vision, though it comes from the god within. This is the imagination that Paracelsus called “the star in man” and identified with the astral body.

Vaughan ends with a set of ten “magical aphorisms” (“Aphorismi Magici”). They are closer to the concerns of his first tracts, which treated the biblical creation in terms of the Pythagorean tractys, reaching from unity through duality to trinity and quaternity. Waite has called them “a kind of chaotic Kabalism, designed to set forth the successive manifestation of created things.”<sup>88</sup> They may have their origin in Gerard Dorn’s “Physics of Trithemius,” with its interest in the Monad, Binarius, etc.<sup>89</sup> They have been mistaken, quite deliberately it seems, for a “*Rosycrucean Creed*.”<sup>90</sup> And here we may note that Vaughan had his detractors as well as his followers, those who thought his books full of nonsense instead of mystery.

## A Parable

There is an interesting point of comparison for Vaughan’s allegory of initiation in the alchemical *Parabola* sometimes attributed to Adrian von Mynsicht, born Adrian Seumensicht (1603–1638). The text has long been considered a Rosicrucian document, and there is a book-length commentary on it that uses the words “fantasy,” “imagination,” “vision,” and their variants.<sup>91</sup> The book’s author, Herbert Silberer, was a Viennese psychologist of the early twentieth century: a member of Freud’s “Wednesday Circle” (*Mittwochkreis*) and a student of the occult sciences. The translator, Smith Ely Jelliffe, was an American neurologist and psychologist, who founded the *Psychoanalytic Review*, the first English-language publication devoted to this new medical field. He was also an early authority of psychosomatic medicine. Silberer recognized the significance

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<sup>88</sup> Thomas Vaughan, *Lumen de Lumine*, ed. Arthur Edward Waite (London: John M. Watkins, 1910), 83.

<sup>89</sup> Gerard Dorn, “Physica Trithemii,” *Theatrum Chemicum* (see note 43), 1:388–99. One of Vaughan’s favorite alchemical authors, Jean d’Espagne, had written his major book as a series of aphorisms. See *Enchyridion Physicae Restitutae; or, The Summary of Physics Recovered*, trans. John Everard (London: W. Sheares and Robert Tutchein, 1651).

<sup>90</sup> Richard Burthogge, *An Essay on Reason, and the Nature of Spirits* (London: John Dunton, 1694), 43; cited in *The Works of Thomas Vaughan*, ed. Rudrum (see note 3), 687.

<sup>91</sup> Herbert Silberer, *Problems of Mysticism and Its Symbolism*, trans. Smith Ely Jelliffe (New York: Moffatt, Yard, 1917); originally published as *Probleme der Mystik und ihrer Symbolik* (Vienna: Hugo Heller, 1914). The translation has been reissued as *Hidden Symbolism of Alchemy and the Occult Sciences* (New York: Dover, 1971).

of alchemy as what Jelliffe called a “proto-psychology” well over a decade before Jung came to the same material.<sup>92</sup>

Silberer based his study on Mynsicht’s allegorical tale which he had found in a late-eighteenth-century collection of Rosicrucian material. The introduction to the second volume is followed by a “parable wherein the whole art is comprised” (“Folget nun die Parabola, wohin die ganze Kunst begriffen ist”).<sup>93</sup> The art here is alchemy, treated as a spiritual discipline. The parable is told in the first person and struck Silberer very much as “a fairy tale or a picturesque dream” (14). In the tale, a wanderer comes to a garden where a college of adepts meets. They query him and are amazed by his ability to answer their questions. Then they set him the task of killing and anatomizing a lion, which he again does with aplomb. The challenges get harder, and he must then marry a beautiful couple in a hot bath. The woman dies, but he manages to revive her, and in effect to complete the alchemical work of joining two substances to create an immortal third. There are many further details to which Silberer attends, but these are the most important. The tale’s narrator is challenged and performs miracles that his waking self could not perform or even understand.

Silberer recognized that the tale as told seems “a free play of fantasy” with “the same structure as dreams,” a structure based largely on free association (43–44). He proceeded to apply Freudian “dream work” to the parable, which he considered “a creation of the imagination” and thus like a dream (43). However, he thought myth and fairy tales (*Märchen*) to be more fully developed as “works of imagination” (44). Finally, recognizing that early Rosicrucianism was primarily a movement in print, developed by authors like Robert Fludd, he concluded:

It is enough that the rosicrucians are created in the imagination, that this imagination is fostered and that people live it out and make it real. It amounts to the same thing for us, whether there were ‘so called’ or ‘real’ rosicrucians; the substance of their teaching lives and this substance, which is evident in literature, was what I referred to when I said that rosicrucianism is identical with higher alchemy or the hermetic or the royal art. (207)

<sup>92</sup> Smith Ely Jelliffe, “Translator’s Preface,” *Problems of Mysticism and Its Symbolism* (see note 91), iii–v; here iv. Jung would acknowledge Silberer’s leading role only at the end of his last book on alchemy: C. G. Jung, *Mysterium Coniunctionis*, trans. R. F. C. Hull, 2nd ed. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1970), 555.

<sup>93</sup> *Geheime Figuren der Rosenkreuzer: aus dem 16ten und 17ten Jahrhundert: aus einem alten Mscpt. zum erstenmal ans Licht gestellt*, 3 parts in 2 vols. (Altona [near Hamburg]: J. D. A. Eckhardt, 1785 and 1788); the pages are reprinted in facsimile and translated in *A Christian Rosenkreutz Anthology* (see note 76), 299–301. The “secret figures” were associated with the Masonic order of the Gold- und Rosenkreutz (Gold and Red Cross), on which see Christopher McIntosh, *The Rose Cross and the Age of Reason: Eighteenth-Century Rosicrucianism in Central Europe and Its Relationship to the Enlightenment* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1991), 75–132.

Silberer noted that “visionaries” who create texts like the “Parabola” have thought on a level closer to that of the psychoanalyst than to that of the patient who presents dreams for analysis.

To name this level of thought, Silberer drew a term from biblical exegesis. As we have seen, Christian authors used the word *anagogia* for the most spiritually uplifting sense of a passage in the Bible. The anagogy helps the Christian think about the rewards in Heaven and thus gives a moral dimension to their thought about biblical texts.<sup>94</sup> Silberer took special interest in “multiple interpretation”: interpretation that used the older methods of the alchemists and hermetists along with the newer ones of psychoanalysts. His attraction to the old methods may have doomed his relationship with his fellow Freudians, and he took his own life only a few years after his book’s publication. However, he argued that both methods had much in common at the anagogic level, when “a product of the imagination harmonizes with several expositions” (241). I have suggested that this form of interpretation could be applied to Vaughan’s engraving when seen as a totality. For Silberer, anagogy is a strictly “functional interpretation,” in which “a product of the imagination harmonizes with several expositions.” Presumably, authors of initiation allegories have the same care for prospective members of the order as psychoanalysts have for their patients.

I do not intend to subject Vaughan’s engraving and commentary to a psychological interpretation. However, it may be noted that the treasure on which the child sits could be read as a dung heap. Silberer includes a long interpretive note on “gold and offal” (418–19). Meanwhile, dung has its place in alchemical imagery as a source of gentle heat and a symbol of the raw stuff that must putrefy at the beginning of the alchemical work.<sup>95</sup> In Vaughan’s Rosicrucian letter, the seeker finds the treasure at the mountaintop, while in his engraving it rests underground, protected by the winged dragon, which represents mercury in its dual nature of liquid and gas, while we have seen that the serpent biting its tail is treated as a symbol of psychic unity by Jungian analysts.<sup>96</sup> It is only in the interpretation of what the dream says about the reader or the allegory about the alchemical work that real differences will emerge.

<sup>94</sup> See Oxford English Dictionary Online, “anagogic, *noun* and *adjective*.” The theological sense is juxtaposed to the psychological, juxtaposing quotations from Wycliffe and Silberer.

<sup>95</sup> See the entry on “dung, dunghill” in *A Dictionary of Alchemical Imagery*, ed. Lyndy Abraham (see note 60), 61–62. Dragons meanwhile figure in myths as guardians of treasure and secret entrances. See also the Introduction to the present volume by Albrecht Classen.

<sup>96</sup> See the gloss on “dragon” in *A Dictionary of Alchemical Imagery* (see note 60), 59–50; also see note 80 above.

## Conclusion

Four months after *Lumen de Lumine* appeared in the bookstalls, Thomas Vaughan married the daughter of an Anglican clergyman. Rebecca Vaughan seems to have brought no other dowry than her maiden Bible and a book of devotions. The couple took lodgings on the north end of Gray's Inn Lane (now Road) and devoted much of their time to chemical operations. During their time together, he wrote two other essays: the introduction to the first English edition of the Rosicrucian manifestos, first printed in 1614 and 1615,<sup>97</sup> and a last book on alchemy, in which he confessed his early errors and gave his mature views about the transmutation of metals.<sup>98</sup> After Rebecca died, Vaughan found work as a chemical operator for the first president of the Royal Society, Sir Robert Moray. He died in February 1666, leaving his books and papers to Moray.

The Dutch scholar Wouter J. Hannegraaff, whose call to recognize imagination as a key element in the creation of religious history has been noted earlier, devotes a full chapter of his book *Esotericism in the Academy* to the role of imagination in the formation of esoteric traditions. He even includes a section on the literary imagination as it shaped counter histories of Rosicrucianism, positive in the *Comte de Gabalis* while negative in the nearly contemporary *Histoire d'imaginations extravagantes de Monsieur Oefle*.<sup>99</sup>

What began as the story of a traveler in a previous century, as told in the first Rosicrucian manifesto, set a model for the way that “invisible colleges” of like-minded naturalists would be envisioned.<sup>100</sup> Vaughan contributed to the development of a Rosicrucian tradition in England, answering needs that he and others felt amid what his first biographer called “the unsettledness of the times.”<sup>101</sup>

Like Cornelius Agrippa, for whose work he expressed a deep appreciation, Vaughan identified a real difference between fantasy and imagination. Those who seek to understand the whole of God's creation must try to understand what St. Paul termed “the invisible things” of God, the *invisibilia*. They must

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<sup>97</sup> Eugenius Philalethes (Thomas Vaughan), “The Preface,” *The Fame and Confession of the Fraterintie of R: C:* (see note 69), a1r–d4r. Vaughan made it clear that he did not translate the texts or edit them, but was persuaded to write the preface.

<sup>98</sup> Eugenius Philalethes (Thomas Vaughan), *Euphrates; or, the Waters of the East* (London: Humphrey Moseley, 1655). Moseley was the publisher or bookseller of choice for literary authors like John Milton and Henry Vaughan.

<sup>99</sup> See note 7 and Wouter J. Hannegraaff, *Esotericism in the Academy: Rejected Knowledge in Western Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 153–256, esp. 222–30.

<sup>100</sup> See P. G. Maxwell-Stuart, *The Chemical Choir* (London and New York: Continuum Books, 2008), 105–22.

<sup>101</sup> Wood, “Thomas Vaughan” (see note 31), vol. 2, 253.

seek this knowledge through “the things that are made,” the *quae facta sunt* (Romans 1:20).<sup>102</sup> That is to say, they must investigate the invisible world, where their first efforts will necessarily involve fantasy and confusion as they wander without the benefit of eyesight. If the light is to be made “visibly manifest” – *manifeste uisibilis* in Agrippa’s phrase – they must amend their ways of living and thinking to become as little children, open to all the wonders of creation. But that is not enough. Each must also find a guide, which may be an angel or spiritual messenger. For the journey is to be made by the soul rather than the body. Vaughan uses the words “soul” and “anima” repeatedly in the comments that follow the dreamer’s map and the Rosicrucian letter, and one would not be wrong to speak of the journey as involving what some psychologists call “soul-work.”<sup>103</sup>

In the material from Vaughan’s *Lumine de Lumine* on which this paper has focused, the engraved “image of the school of magic” may be said to represent the vision given to the dreaming Eugenius Philalethes in the “mineral region” underground. That world, in turn, may be said to be illuminated by the same divine imagination that informed the revelations in the Hermetic texts of antiquity, the *Corpus Hermeticum* translated by Marsilio Ficino during the Italian Renaissance of the Cinquecento. However, that light is blocked from ordinary adult consciousness by the symbolic blindfold imposed by original sin. To see the light, the blindfolded man must first wander in the region of phantasms or fantasies, which the dreamer in Vaughan’s allegory has been told are “empty imaginarie Whymzies, for Abstractions are so many Phantastic Suppositions” (*LL*, 17). The Rosicrucian letter builds on this trinity of fantasy, imagination, and revelation principally by expanding on the biblical theme “There is Nothing covered [hidden], that shall not be revealed” (*LL*, 33; Matthew 10:26; cf. Luke 12:2).

The Rosicrucian messages assume that the world has reached its “last Age,” when all secrets shall be made known.<sup>104</sup> This assumption was associated with the biblical promise, in the final chapter of the Christian Old Testament, “Behold I send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD” (Malachi 4:5). The letter itself denounces the fantasy of gold-making as an end in itself (*LL*, 34) while it helps the reader imagine the life-changing vision

**102** Like his better educated readers, Vaughan used the *Vulgatum Clentinum* first issued in 1592.

**103** See, e.g., James Hillman, *The Myth of Analysis: Three Essays in Archetypal Psychology* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1997), 94.

**104** *Fama Fraternitatis* (1614), translated in *The Fame and Confession of the Fraternity of R: C:* (see note 69), 13.

to be had by the seeker of truth who is guided by prayer and angelic assistance to a vision on the mountaintop.

In this chapter, I have tried to read Vaughan's *Lumen de Lumine* in the way that he read a favorite author like Cornelius Agrippa: imaginatively, as a late-comer to his chosen tradition. In saying this, I think of Vaughan's comment in his most strictly historical discourse. Without claiming to be an antiquarian or anything more than an eager reader in the well-stocked library of the friend to whom he dedicated the text, Vaughan said he saw himself as "an *Usher* to the *Traine*, and one borne out of due time"<sup>105</sup> – that is, as an attendant to the procession he was introducing, from Moses and Hermes Trismegistus down to Agrippa and authors of his own century.

Vaughan's tradition could be challenged on historical grounds – for example, with the re-dating of texts attributed to Hermes Trismegistus in remote antiquity to the early Christian era.<sup>106</sup> But that does not keep it from being Vaughan's tradition or, in the useful term of Schmidt-Biggemann, his "counter-world"<sup>107</sup> as well as a product of the historical imagination. When one studies a counter-world on its own terms, one has a certain privilege. I could say with the German historian and folklorist Will-Erich Peuckert, that in my contact with Vaughan and his Rosicrucian sources 'I have been allowed to experience magic as truth' ("ich habe Magie als Wahrheit spüren dürfen").<sup>108</sup> Vaughan insisted that he – or at least his alter-ego Eugenius Philalethes, the nobly-born lover of truth – was obliged to tell the truth. He thought that magic was a higher truth: "the *Wisdom* of the *Creator* revealed and planted in the *Creature*."<sup>109</sup> He asked, however, to be judged by the integrity of his conception, a world view or counter-world that later generations of English speakers would come to regard as imaginative rather than imaginary.

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**105** Vaughan, *Magia Adamica* (see note 9), 8. The discourse is dedicated to Thomas Henshaw, a chemist who later became a Fellow of the Royal Society of London.

**106** See the chapter on developments "After Hermes Trismegistus Was Dated" in Frances A. Yates, *Giordano Bruno and the Hermetic Tradition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964), 398–431.

**107** See note 5 above.

**108** Peuckert *Pansophie* (see note 36), xiii. From the preface to the first edition of a significant book, which sadly led to withdrawal of the author's *venia legendi* or right to teach in the same year (1935).

**109** Vaughan, *Magia Adamica* (see note 9), 1.





Fig. 1: "Image of the school of magic" from Thomas Vaughan, *Lumen de Lumine* (1651) (public domain)



Quelle: Deutsche Fotothek

**Fig. 2:** “Conjunction” from Stephan Michelspacher, *Cabala, Spiegel der Kunst und Natur* (1615; Augsburg: Johann Weh, 1654). Michelspacher’s dedication to the Rosicrucians appears in the Latin edition of 1616.

# Biographies of the Contributors

**Sally Abed** teaches in the English department at Alexandria University, Egypt. She received her B.A. from the Alexandria University in 2003, her M.A. from the University of Arizona in 2010, and her Ph.D. from the University of Utah in 2017. Her dissertation title was “Mapping the World in Medieval and Early Modern European and Arabic Travel Accounts.” Her research interests include travel narratives and women’s studies. Her publications include: “From Feet to Wings: The Importance of Being Bare-Footed in Toni Morrison’s *Song of Solomon*” (*Utah Foreign Language Review* 2014), “The Past into the Present: Teaching the One Thousand and One Nights between Medieval Storytelling and Modern Media” (*The Once and Future Classroom, Special Issue on Teaching Medieval Arabic Studies XIV.1* [I 2017]), “Water Rituals and the Preservation of Identity in Ibn Fadlan’s *Risala*,” *Travel, Time, and Space in the Middle Ages and Early Modern Time* (ed. Albrecht Classen, 2018), and “The Transformation of the World through Pleasure and Performance in the Thousand and One Nights,” *Pleasure and Leisure in the Middle Ages and Early Modern Time* (ed. Albrecht Classen, 2019).

**Robert Landau Ames** received his Ph.D. from Harvard’s Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations in May 2018. His doctoral dissertation, which is now under contract with Gorgias Press (an independent academic publisher), focuses on the relationship between mysticism and political culture in Safavid and Qajar Iran. He frequently reviews books for *Reading Religion* (an online publication of the American Academy of Religion) and has been published in *Comparative Islamic Studies* and *Brill’s Journal of Sufi Studies*. Rob returned to Harvard to serve as a lecturer on Persian literature in Spring 2019. He currently teaches in NYU’s Liberal Studies program.

**Jane Beal**, PhD, is a tenured, full professor and the chair of the English department at the University of La Verne in southern California. She has published the monograph, *John Trevisa and the English Polychronicon* (ACMRS/Brepols, 2012), and co-edited the festschrift, *Translating the Past: Essays on Medieval Literature in Honor of Marijane Osborn* (ACMRS, 2012). She has also published *The Signifying Power of Pearl: Medieval Literary and Cultural Contexts for the Transformation of Genre* (Routledge, 2017), co-authored and co-edited *Approaches to Teaching the Middle English Pearl* (MLA, 2018), and edited and translated *Pearl: A Middle English Edition and Modern English Translation* (Broadview, 2020). She is the editor of two volumes of academic essays on the reception of major religious figures in the Middle Ages, *Illuminating Moses: A History of Reception from Exodus to the Renaissance* (Brill, 2014), and *Illuminating Jesus in the Middle Ages* (Brill, 2019). She also writes poetry, magical realist fiction, and creative non-fiction (<https://janebeal.wordpress.com>).

**Chiara Benati** is Associate Professor of Germanic Philology at the University of Genoa, Italy, where she teaches both Germanic Philology and Scandinavian Language History. She has published, among others, essays on the Middle Low German influence of the phraseology of the oldest Swedish written sources (*L’influsso bassotedesco sulla fraseologia dello svedese tra Medioevo ed Età Moderna*, 2006), on the Middle High German Dietrich epic and its reception in Scandinavia (*Laurin e Walberan. Introduzione, traduzione dall’altotedesco medio e commento*, 2007). Her main research interests include Middle High German literature, Middle Low German- Scandinavian language contact, Faroese language and literature, Middle

Low German charms and blessings, as well as specialized terminology in the earliest (Low) German surgical treatises. This interest in German vernacular surgical sources has resulted, up to now, in the publication of two monographs (*Das Boek der Wundenartzstedye und der niederdeutsche chirurgische Fachwortschatz*, 2012; and *Die niederdeutsche Fassung des Feldtbuchs der Wundarzney in Kopenhagen, Kongelige bibliotek, GKS 1663 4<sup>o</sup>. Edition und Kommentar*, 2017), and a series of articles on Brunswig's *Cirurgia* and its Low German adaptation, as well as on the Low German manuscript version of Hans von Gersdorff's *Feldtbuch der Wundarzney* in Copenhagen, GKS 1663 4to. She is member of the editorial board of the *Revista Brathair – Revista de Estudos Celtas e Germanicos* and of *Scandia: Journal of Medieval Norse Studies*.

**David Bennett**, Ph.D., UCLA, Near Eastern Languages and Cultures, 2011, was a Research Associate in "Representation and Reality," a research program on the Aristotelian tradition funded by Riksbankens Jubileumsfond at the Department of Philosophy, Linguistics, and Theory of Science at the University of Gothenburg, Sweden. He specializes in the philosophical and theological controversies of the Islamic world in the ninth to tenth centuries, particularly the early development of Mu'tazilite thought. His contributions on pre-Avicennan accounts of sense perception, veridical dreams, and conceptualization will be published in Representation and Reality's three-volume final production in the coming year. He has various publications on the nature of things and cognizable content in forthcoming edited volumes. His most recent publications include the chapter "The Early Mu'tazilites," in *Oxford Companion to Islamic Theology*, ed. Sabine Schmidtke (2016); "A Newly Discovered Yahyā ibn 'Adī Treatise against Atomism," an edition and translation, with Robert Wisnovsky (2015), in Damien Janos, ed., *Ideas in Motion: Philosophical and Theological Exchanges between Christians and Muslims in Baghdad and Beyond in the 3rd/9th and 4th/10th Centuries*; and a translation of selections of a later Persian text in *An Anthology of Philosophy in Persia*, ed. Seyyed Hossein Nasr and Mehdi Aminrazavi, vol. 5 (2015). He is currently working on a monograph about atoms in Arabic thought.

**Siegfried Christoph**, Emeritus Professor of German at the University of Wisconsin-Parkside, is a native of Berlin, Germany. He received his Ph.D. in 1980 from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. His research interests concentrate on the literatures and culture of the Middle High German period. His publications include an edition and translation of Konrad von Stoffeln's *Gauriel von Muntabel* (2007), and a *Lemmatisierter Index zu den Werken des Stricker* (1997). Recent articles have included "Hospitality and Status: Social Intercourse in Middle High German Arthurian Romance and Courtly Narrative" (2010) and "An Onomastic Note on Wolfram's *Gahmuret*" (2010). His article "The Language and Culture of Joy" (2010) has been cited numerous times. Current research projects include the concepts of honor and shame, as well as the role and evolution of falconry in courtly society.

**Albrecht Classen** is University Distinguished Professor of German Studies at The University of Arizona. He has published more than ninety-nine books, most recently *The Medieval Chastity Belt: A Myth-Making Process* (2007), *The Power of a Woman's Voice* (2007); the English translation of the poems by Oswald von Wolkenstein (1376/77–1445) (2008); a book on Sixteenth-Century German Jest Narratives (*Deutsche Schwankliteratur*, 2009); *Lied und Liederbuch in der Frühen Neuzeit*, together with Lukas Richter, 2009, and *Tiere als Freunde im Mittelalter*, together with Gabriela Kompatscher and Peter Dinzelsbacher (2010). In 2011 he

published *Sex im Mittelalter*. Among the volumes that he has edited recently are *Words of Love and Love of Words in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance* (2008), *Sexuality in the Middle Ages and Early Modern Time* (2008), *Urban Space in the Middle Ages and Early Modern Time* (2009), *War and Peace* (2011), and *Rural Space in the Middle Ages and Early Modern Time* (2012). A three-volume *Handbook of Medieval Studies* (with Walter de Gruyter) appeared in 2010 (award of the “Outstanding Academic Title” by *Choice*). His latest books dealt with the history of German-speaking Jesuit missionaries in eighteenth-century Sonora, *The Letters of the Swiss Jesuit Missionary Philipp Segesser (1689–1762)*, and *Early History of the Southwest Through the Eyes of German-Speaking Jesuit Missionaries* (both 2012). He published his *Handbook of Medieval Culture* (3 vols.) in 2015, and his latest monographs on *The Forest in Medieval German Literature* (2015) and on *Water in Medieval Literature* (2018) pursue ecocritical perspectives. Most recently he published *Toleration and Tolerance in Medieval and Early Modern European Literature* (2018) and *Travel, Time, and Space in the Middle Ages and Early Modern Time* (ed., 2018). His latest book deals with *Prostitution in Medieval Literature* (2019). In 2008 the University of Arizona bestowed upon him its highest award for research, the “Henry & Phyllis Koffler Award.” In 2004 the German government awarded him with the *Bundesverdienstkreuz am Band* (Order of Merit), its highest civilian award. He has also received numerous teaching and service awards over the last three decades, most recently the “Five Star Faculty Award” (2009) and the “Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching 2012 Arizona Professor of the Year Award.” He is serving as editor of the journals *Mediaevistik* and *Humanities–Open Access, Online*. For many years he has been the president of the Arizona chapter of the American Association of Teachers of German, and recently completed his role as President/Past President of the Rocky Mountain Modern Language Association for the fourth time in 2018. The RMLA awarded him with its Sterling Membership Award in 2013. In 2015 he received the Excellence in Academic Advising Faculty Advisor Award, followed by a Certificate of Merit from NACADA: The Global Community for Academic Advising. In 2016, friends and colleagues dedicated a *Festschrift* (*Mediaevistik* 28) to him on the occasion of his 60th birthday. In recognition of his accomplishments, he received the rank of Grand Knight Commander of the Most Noble Order of the Three Lions in 2017. In 2020, he received the DAAD AA (German Academic Exchange Program) Excellence Award in International Exchange. He also writes poetry (currently 9 vols.) and satires (currently 2 vols.), and he is the new President of the *Society of Contemporary American Literature in German* (SCALG), and Book Review Editor of its journal, *Transl-Lit2*.

**Edward Currie** received a Ph.D. in Medieval Studies in 2018 from Cornell University where he taught for four years and was a Dean’s Scholar. He has presented conference papers on Old English and Old Norse poetry at Kalamazoo and Indiana University, and on Latin historiography at Cornell. He also received an M.A. in Medieval Studies from Cornell in 2016 and an M.A. in English from Stony Brook University in 2010. He received a B.A. in English in 2008 from Stony Brook.

**Fidel Fajardo-Acosta** is Professor of English at Creighton University in Omaha, Nebraska. He taught before at California State University in Los Angeles and the University of Colorado in Boulder. Dr. Fajardo-Acosta has a Ph.D. degree in Comparative Literature from the University of Iowa, an M.F.A. in English from the Iowa Writers’ Workshop, and a B.A. in Economics-Mathematics from Colby College. His works include, *Courtly Seductions, Modern Subjections: Troubadour Literature and the Medieval Construction of the Modern World*, published by

ACMRS in 2010, a book that examines the subjectivities implicit in troubadour literature and their relations to the emergence of commerce and the centralization of political authority in the High Middle Ages. His book *The Condemnation of Heroism in the Tragedy of Beowulf* appeared in 1989, followed by *The Hero's Failure in the Tragedy of Odysseus* in 1990, and *The Influence of the Classical World on Medieval Literature, Architecture, Music and Culture* (ed. volume) in 1992. He is so the author of various articles on Virgil's *Aeneid*, Dante, Alfonso X el Sabio, Renaissance painting, Cervantes' *Don Quixote*, Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, Gabriel García Márquez, and courtly literature of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries; most recently "The King is Dead, Long Live the Game: Alfonso X, el Sabio, and the *Libro de açedrex, dados e tablas*," *eHumanista* 31 (2015): 489–523, and "Subjects of the Game: The Pleasures of Subjection in William IX's 'Ben vueill que sapchon li pluzor,'" *Pleasure and Leisure in the Middle Ages and Early Modern Time* (ed. Albrecht Classen, 2019).

**Emmy Herland** will receive her Ph.D. in Hispanic Studies at the University of Washington, Seattle, in June of 2020. She received her B.A. in Liberal Arts with a concentration in World Literatures from Sarah Lawrence College, NY, in 2011 and her M.A. in Hispanic Studies from the University of Washington in 2016. Her primary research area is seventeenth-century Spanish drama, and her dissertation, titled "Apparitions Can Be Deceiving," is a study of ghosts and the undead in five Golden Age plays. Her research interests include spectral studies, the supernatural, gender and sexuality studies, and performance studies, among others. Her article, "The Haunting Letter: Presence, Absence, and Writing in Sab," which studies the spectrality of the written word in a nineteenth-century Cuban-Spanish novel, was recently published in *eTropic: Electronic Journal of Studies of the Tropics's* special issue on *Tropical Gothic*.

**Filip Hrbek**, is a Ph.D. student at the History Department of the Jan Evangelista Purkyně University in Ústí nad Labem, the Czech Republic. He received his B.A. and M.A. also there. In 2014 he received the Zdeněk Horský Award from the Society for the History of Sciences and Technology for his diploma theses "Doctors, 'Prelates' and Humanists – Plague Disease in the Treaties of Pre-Thirty Years' War Bohemia." His dissertation project title is "Disease not only as a physical suffering in the Pre-Thirty Years' War Bohemia." He teaches the Czech medieval history and the history of medicine in the Middle Ages and early modern period. Apart from that, his research interests include the history of mentalities, the regional history, and the history of Czech-German relationships. Recently he published a study called "Czech-Written Prints on Plague: 16th Century" in *Plague Between Prague & Vienna: Medicine and Infectious Diseases in Early Modern Central Europe*, ed. Karel Černý and Sonia Horn (2018).

**Isidro Luis Jiménez** is a graduate student and PhD candidate at the department of Spanish and Portuguese, the University of Arizona. His dissertation focuses on the myth of the Amazons in the Hispanic world during the medieval and early modern periods. He is especially interested in transatlantic culture and colonial literature on the Americas on the sixteenth century. His recent articles include, for instance: "Categorías político-biológicas en *La Casa de los Espíritus* de Isabel Allende," *Anales de literatura hispanoamericana* 47 (2018): 493–501; "Los infantes de Carrión y las hijas del Cid: su realidad histórica en relación con los personajes literarios," *Revista de literaturas hispánicas Philobiblion* 3 (2016): 7–18; and "Las amazonas, California, Rodríguez de Montalvo y las crónicas americanas," *Revista de literaturas hispánicas Philobiblion* 1 (2015): 67–79.

**Martha Moffitt Peacock** is Professor of Art History at Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah. Her publications deal with themes of female empowerment through art in the Dutch Republic such as “The Maid of Holland and Her Heroic Heiresses (2019),” “Proverbial Reframing – Rebuking and Revering Women in Trousers (1999),” and “Domesticity in the Public Sphere (2003).” She has also published on women artists such as Geertruydt Roghman, Anna Maria van Schurman, and Joanna Koerten. Additionally, she contributed to and edited two exhibition catalogs on the prints of Rembrandt and his circle. Recently, she has completed work on a forthcoming book entitled *Heroines, Harpies, and Housewives: Imaging Women of Consequence in the Dutch Golden Age*. She has also received the following awards: Honors Professor of the Year, Alice Louise Reynolds Women-in-Scholarship Lecture Award, Women’s Research Institute Distinguished Research Award, Alcuin Award for Excellence in Research and Teaching, and the Woodrow Wilson Research Grant in Women’s Studies.

**Daniel F. Pigg** is a Professor of English at The University of Tennessee at Martin where he teaches courses on Chaucer, medieval British literature, and history of the English language. He also teaches in several areas of Religious Studies. He has published widely in English Medieval Studies, ranging from *Beowulf* to Malory’s *Le Morte D’Arthur*. He has published articles dealing with various aspects of masculinity in historical contexts in Chaucer’s *Canterbury Tales* and in the presentation of *Beowulf* in various anthologies available to high school students. He has also published on the representation of masculinity in Chrétien de Troyes’s *Érec et Énide*. Other publications include an article on Langland’s *Piers Plowman* and Old Age that appeared in the collection of essays arising from the 2006 International Symposium on the Representation of Old Age in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance (ed. Albrecht Classen, 2007). He has also contributed to the *Handbook of Medieval Studies* (ed. Albrecht Classen, 2010) on scholarly studies of masculinity studies and social constructionism. Other publications include an essay on Chaucer’s mass of death arising from the 2015 International Symposium on Death in the Middle Ages and Early Modern times (ed. Classen 2017). An essay on *Bald’s Leechbook* arising from the 2015 International Symposium on the Body and Hygiene in the Middle Ages and Early Modern Period was also published (ed. Classen, 2017). More recently he has contributed an essay on “Representing Magic and Science in *The Franklin’s Tale* and *The Pardoner’s Tale*” to *Magic and Magicians in the Middle Ages and the Early Modern Time: The Occult in Pre-Modern Sciences, Medicine, Literature, Religion, and Astrology* (ed. Classen, 2017). He continues to work on a book-length manuscript on *Piers Plowman* and cultural poetics. The essay today on Grendel in *Beowulf* is an attempt to uncover the construction of the monster Grendel and what that tells us about Danish society as represented in the poem.

**John Pizer** is Professor of German and Comparative Literature at Louisiana State University. He is the author of five books and some eighty articles and book chapters. His area of specialty is German literature and thought from the eighteenth through the twentieth century, with occasional forays into the Baroque and Comparative Literature, such as his recently-published essay “Baroque Pageantry, Enlightenment Inwardness, Prerevolutionary Courtly & Popular Solidarity: The Evolution of Alcestis Operas in the 17th and 18th Centuries,” *Lessing Yearbook* 42 (2015): 7–23. His most recent books are *The Idea of World Literature: History and Pedagogical Practice* (2006) and *Imagining the Age of Goethe in German Literature, 1970–2010* (2011). His current book project examines dissatisfaction with the process of German

reunification and its aftermath as expressed in imaginative literature from shortly after the dissolution of the German Democratic Republic to the present day.

**Filip Radovic** is a Senior lecturer in Philosophy at Gothenburg University, Sweden. He has recently edited a volume together with Börje Bydén: *The Parva Naturalia in Greek, Arabic and Latin Aristotelianism. Supplementing the Science of the Soul. Studies in the History of Philosophy of Mind* (Springer, 2018). A selection of his published work includes *The Sense of Death and Non-Existence in Nihilistic Delusions* (Phenomenology and the Cognitive Sciences, 2017); *Aristotle on Prevision Through Dreams* (Ancient Philosophy, 2016); a book in Swedish on the meaning of life, *Livets mening* (Studentlitteratur, 2012); *What is Mental in Mental in Mental Disorder* (together with Bengt Brölde, Philosophy, Psychiatry and Psychology, 2006); *Dysfunctions, Disabilities and Disordered Minds* (together with Bengt Brölde [Philosophy, Psychiatry and Psychology, 2006]); *Feelings of Unreality: A Conceptual and Phenomenological Analysis of the Language of Depersonalization* (together with Susanna Radovic, Philosophy, Psychiatry and Psychology, 2002). He was a member of the research program *Representation and Reality* [<https://representationandreality.gu.se/>] at Gothenburg University, which concluded in 2019.

**Scott L. Taylor**, Ph.D., J.D., is a retired attorney in Tucson, Arizona, who subsequent to his retirement has taught history and political science at the University of Arizona and Pima Community College, inter alia. After his Ph. D. at the University of Arizona in 2005, he has authored a number of papers and articles dealing with aspects of medieval law, particularly its intersection with culture and society at large, as well as several articles dealing with medieval theology, especially that of Jean Gerson. His reviews have appeared in several publications, including *Theological Studies* and *Mediavistik*. Since 2007, he has been a regular contributor to the Walter de Gruyter series of volumes, “Fundamentals of Medieval and Early Modern Culture,” edited by Albrecht Classen and Marilyn Sandidge (most recently in *Pleasure and Leisure in the Middle Ages and Early Modern Time*, 2019), and also in the *Handbook of Medieval Studies* (2010) and the *Handbook of Medieval Culture* (2015).

**Warren Tormey** has taught in the English Department at Middle Tennessee State University since 1995. A scholar of Medieval and Early English Renaissance Literature by training, he maintains interests in these fields as well as in Milton Studies, the epic tradition, economic history, scientific and technical history, ecocriticism, and popular culture. He serves his department by teaching survey classes in Medieval and Renaissance English Literature and Special Topics courses on Modern American Nature Writing and Modern American Environmental Literature. He also taught in the “Great Books in Tennessee Prisons” Program from 2007 through 2014. He has recent publications in *ELR* on John Evelyn and in *Medieval Perspectives* on Spenser’s *Faerie Queene*, and a forthcoming article on Rachel Carson in *Studies in Popular Culture*. He has also contributed articles to the new volumes *Bodily and Spiritual Hygiene in Medieval and Early Modern Literature*, *Magic and Magicians in the Middle Ages and the Early Modern Time* (2017), *Travel, Time, and Space in the Middle Ages and Early Modern Time* (2018), and *Pleasure and Leisure in the Middle Ages and Early Modern Time* (2019), all edited by Albrecht Classen.

**Christa Agnes Tuczy** received her Ph.D. from the University of Vienna, Austria in 1981 and has worked there ever since in different positions and projects. Her dissertation was focused



on “Die Seele außerhalb in den Volkserzählungen,” which appeared as a book in the same year with the title *Der Unhold ohne Seele*. She has published subsequently the following monographs and text editions: *Magie und Magier im Mittelalter* (1992); *Die aventiurehafte Dietrichepik: Laurin und Walberan, Jüngerer Sigenot, Eckenlied, Wunderer* (1999); *Kulturgeschichte der mittelalterlichen Wahrsagerei* (2012); and *Geister, Dämonen – Phantasmen: Eine Kulturgeschichte* (2012). In 2006 appeared the six-volume *Motif-Index of the German Secular Narratives from the Beginning to 1400*, which she edited together with Rainer Sigl and Karin Lichtblau; this was followed by her habilitation study *Ekstase im Kontext* (2009) and the edited volumes *Jenseits: Eine mittelalterliche und mediävistische Imagination: Interdisziplinäre Ansätze zur Analyse des Unerklärlichen* (2016), and *Traum narrative: Motivische Muster – Erzählerische Traditionen – Medienübergreifende Perspektiven* (2018), which she edited together with Thomas Ballhausen. She also contributed to the *Handbook of Medieval Culture* (ed. Albrecht Classen 2015) and to the volume *Pleasure and Leisure in the Middle Ages and Early Modern Time* (ed. Albrecht Classen, 2019).

**Birgit Wiedl** is a research fellow at the Institute for Jewish History in Austria. She studied History, German and Slavic Philology at the University of Salzburg and received her doctorate in 2002 and is a graduate of the Institute for Austrian Historical Research at the University of Vienna (M.A.S. in historical research and archival science). She is a lecturer at the Universities of Salzburg and Klagenfurt; in 2016, she obtained the *venia docendi* (Habilitation) for Medieval History at the University of Graz. Since 2008, she is one of the leaders of the FWF-sponsored research projects on Documents on Jewish History in Austria, which have up until 2018 resulted into four volumes of published *Regesten*, which she has produced together with Eveline Brugger. Her main research focus is Jewish-Christian interaction, history of Anti-Judaism as well as economic and urban history. Some of her recent publications include “Anti-Jewish Polemics in Business Charters from Late Medieval Austria,” *Verging on the Polemical: Exploring the Boundaries of Medieval Religious Polemic across Genres and Research Cultures* 7 (2018); “Die Pulkauer Judenverfolgungen (1338) im Spiegel österreichischer, böhmischer und mährischer Quellen,” *Juden in Böhmen und Mähren im Mittelalter* (2016), and “Sacred Objects in Jewish Hands. Two Case Studies,” *Jews and Christians in Medieval Europe* (2016).

**Thomas Willard** is Professor of English and Religious Studies at the University of Arizona, in Tucson. He has published essays on the relation of literature and ideas, primarily in the late medieval and early modern periods, along with an edition of the alchemical writings of Jean d’Espagne (New York and London 1999). His occasional essays on aspects of Rosicrucianism have appeared in *Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America* (1984), *Theorien vom Ursprung der Sprache* (1989), *Secret Texts: The Literature of Secret Societies* (1995), and *Mystical Metal of Gold: Essays on Alchemy and Renaissance Culture* (2007). He has also published essays on twentieth-century literature and on the literary theory of his former teacher Northrop Frye, and has contributed a number of times to two book series edited by Albrecht Classen: “Fundamentals of Medieval and Early Modern Culture” and “Theophrastus Paracelsus Studien.” Recently he published “Dreams and Symbols in *The Chemical Wedding*,” in *Lux in Tenebris: The Visual and the Symbolic in Western Esotericism*, ed. by Peter J. Forshaw (2017). He also contributed to *Travel, Time, and Space in the Middle Ages and Early Modern Time* (ed. Albrecht Classen, 2018) and *Pleasure and Leisure in the Middle Ages and Early Modern Time* (ed. Albrecht Classen, 2019).

**Jessica Zeitler** earned her Ph.D. in Medieval and Golden Age Spanish Literature with a minor in Arabic and Near Eastern Studies from the University of Arizona in 2013. As a recipient of the Marshall Foundation Dissertation Scholarship she was able to spend a summer in Seville, Spain, researching and writing. In addition to her time in Spain, she also spent a summer in Alexandria, Egypt, with Georgetown University furthering her Arabic language skills and investigating in the library of Alexandria. Since graduation, she has continued her research in medieval al-Andalus, has presented at various international medieval conferences in Kalamazoo, MI, and Leeds, UK, and she teaches Spanish at Pima Community College in Tucson. She has published “Umayyad Spain: The Islamic Legacy in Medieval Education,” *Revisiting Convivencia in Medieval and Early Modern Iberia*, ed. Connie L. Scarborough (Newark, NJ: Juan de la Cuesta, 2014). Today she is using that diverse background to discuss a twelfth-century Andalusian Arabic manuscript and its fantastical representation of medieval women.

# Index

This index includes all relevant names of historical, but also modern figures or personalities, titles of works, events, phenomena, etc. in one alphabetical system for the ease of searching. I have included cross-references between some of the poets and their works when appropriate. When a literary or artistic work is explicitly connected with a poet/artist, I have listed only the latter's name. When a name or title might be confusing as to the alphabetical order, I have provided extra references. I have not included the data in the footnotes here in this index.

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